

Security Council maintains Libya sanctions

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The U.N. Security Council on Friday decided to maintain six-year-old sanctions against Libya at its regular four-monthly review, U.S. Ambassador Bill Richardson announced. "The sanctions are extended," Mr. Richardson said after a closed-door meeting of the U.N. Security Council. Libya has been under a U.N. arms and air embargo since 1992 for refusing to hand over two suspects wanted in connection with the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am jetliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, which killed a total 270 people.

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King, Qaboos discuss unifying Arab position on peace process

MUSCAT (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein held talks with Sultan Qaboos Ben Sa'id of Oman on bilateral ties and ways to bolster inter-Arab solidarity and unify Arab countries' positions on the peace process.

The two leaders demanded the implementation of the Palestinian-Israeli accord and pledged continued support for the Palestinian people to regain their full rights and establish their independent state on their national soil.

The two leaders reviewed the recent U.N.-Iraqi accord, expressed their satisfaction with the agreement and stressed the need for its implementation so as to open the way for direct dialogue that would pave the ground for lifting sanctions imposed on Iraq.

However, AFP reported that the U.S. said Thursday it had considered the King's appeal for direct dialogue with Iraq, but there are no plans to change their current diplomatic standing with Iraq at this time.

"We respectfully considered the King's views, but I am not aware of any plans to change the status of our diplomatic relations or, that



His Majesty King Hussein and Sultan Qaboos of Oman upon His Majesty's arrival in Muscat on Thursday (Petra photo)

is, the lack of diplomatic relations, with Iraq," White House spokesman Michael McCurry said.

King Hussein plans to discuss his proposal with U.S. President Bill Clinton in a meeting expected to take place late March.

The meeting on Thursday

was attended by the Jordanian delegation accompanying the King. They include HRH Prince Abdullah, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Royal Court Chief Fayez Tarawneh, HRH Prince Talal Ben Mohammad, head of the National Security Council, HRH Prince Ghazi Ben

Mohammad, the King's cultural secretary, King Hussein's adviser Salah Abu Zeid and Jordan's ambassador to Oman, Nabil Banto.

The King went to Oman from the United Arab Emirates where he held talks with its president, Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan.

Ritter's team carries out 'surprise' inspections with Iraqi cooperation Indian diplomat named U.N. special representative

Combined agency
dispatches

U.N. WEAPONS inspector Scott Ritter carried out a series of "surprise" inspections on Friday and received full cooperation from Iraq, the official Iraqi news agency INA said.

"The inspection team carried out their usual activities without hindrance and with the total cooperation of the Iraqi side," INA said.

The agency said "Team 227" — the group led by former U.S. marine Ritter — carried out "surprise" inspections at several sites "accompanied by Iraqi minders."

Mr. Ritter's team returned to its Baghdad headquarters at around 6.45 p.m. after nearly 10 hours of work, witnesses said.

The team returned in a convoy of 15 vehicles and an inspection lorry, and team members ignored questions about the nature of their work.

U.N. chief Kofi Annan on Thursday named a senior Indian diplomat as his special representative in Baghdad, ignoring reservations expressed by Washington.

In a letter to the U.N. Security Council, Mr. Annan explained that he had decided to name a special representative in the light of "the difficulties in the relations between Iraq and the United Nations."

The delicate mission of former U.N. Ambassador Prakash Shah would serve "to help avert the development of such difficulties into fully-fledged crises threatening to undermine international peace and security in the area," Mr. Annan said.

Mr. Shah, 58, is to serve in Baghdad for an initial period of six months, and is expected to take up the post by the end of March. He was consulting here Thursday with Security Council members after meeting with Mr. Annan on Wednesday.

Mr. Annan announced on returning from Baghdad on Feb. 24 after signing an agreement with Iraq providing for unfettered U.N. weapons inspections that he planned to name a special representative in Iraq.

He told the U.N. Security Council that the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) responsible for Iraqi disarmament needed more "political supervision."

Mr. Shah will also be directly in touch with Mr. Annan on the implementation of the oil-for-food humanitarian agreement with Iraq.

Mr. Annan said that Mr. Shah would "lend his support to existing United Nations activities in the arms control, humanitarian and economic and social fields."

He would give "special attention to any crisis or problem

which might benefit from intervention by United Nations headquarters."

Mr. Shah retired to New Delhi last August after a two-year posting as U.N. ambassador.

Before joining the diplomatic service, Mr. Shah handled India's external relations on oil and petrochemicals as petroleum ministry director from 1975 to 1977.

Mr. Shah stood up to criticism from the United States in September 1996 when India, Bhutan and Libya were the only states in the U.N. General Assembly to vote against the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty banning underground nuclear explosions.

The treaty was adopted with 158 nations voting in favour.

UNSCOM Chairman Richard Butler, who was then Australian ambassador, was responsible for bringing the treaty to the United Nations for adoption after India blocked the consensus that would have adopted the treaty in Geneva.

The United States expressed reservations about picking an Indian diplomat because of that country's historically close links to Baghdad, and had expressed support for Argentine diplomat Emilio Cardenas instead, diplomats said.

"India has not been known for its complaints about Iraq," one diplomat commented Thursday, suggesting that New Delhi did not have a neutral role in the U.N.-Iraq crisis.

Also Thursday, Mr. Annan discussed procedures for inspecting eight so-called presidential sites in Iraq with Mr. Butler and the Sri Lankan expert who is to be in charge of a new "special group."

The head of the diplomatic arm of the U.N. weapons inspection team, Sri Lankan diplomat Jayantha Dhanapala, leaves Monday for Baghdad, a U.N. spokesman said Friday.

"He will travel to Baghdad on Monday evening to prepare the ground for the activities of the special group," said spokesman Fred Eckhardt.

Mr. Annan named Dhanapala on Feb. 26 to head a special panel that will inspect presidential palaces in Iraq as part of an agreement heading off a U.S. military attack on Iraq.

His panel will work with the U.N. Special Commission to inspect eight sites that Iraq has been particularly reluctant to open up. It is required to do so under agreements ending the 1991 Gulf war.

Detailed procedures for the inspections will be "finalised" and presented to the council on Monday, said Mr. Eckhardt.

Mr. Annan has forwarded seven pages of guidelines on the presidential site inspections to the U.N. Security Council.



American Scott Ritter opens the door to his jeep on Friday morning (AP photo)

Annan fully aware on Ritter mission

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The United Nations on Friday denied that U.N. chief Kofi Annan was not forewarned about the latest Iraqi mission of U.N. weapons inspection team leader Scott Ritter. U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhardt told AFP that "the secretary general and Butler consulted fully" about the inspection mission of Mr. Ritter, a former U.S. marine vilified by Iraq as a U.S. spy. The Arabic daily Al Hayat reported Friday that U.N. Special Commission chief Richard Butler had not informed Mr. Annan in advance about the mission led by Mr. Ritter, who is attempting to track down concealed Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. Mr. Eckhardt said that Mr. Annan and Mr. Butler had "consulted fully over a period of time of more than one day," including over lunch on Wednesday.

However, according to diplomats familiar with the new procedures, Mr. Annan did not stipulate the number of diplomatic observers who are to accompany the UNSCOM inspectors on the presidential site inspections.

He also did not recommend specific nationalities, nor state the cities that the diplomats would be drawn from. U.N. officials said the new teams' composition was still being worked out on Thursday.

Meanwhile, Moscow has asked Mr. Annan to appoint a Russian disarmament expert as a deputy to chief weapons inspector Richard Butler. U.N. officials said on Thursday.

The request, which came in a letter from Moscow's U.N. Ambassador Sergei Lavrov, would put Russia in a key position to determine whether Iraq is still hiding weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Annan passed on the letter, which arrived on Wednesday, to Mr. Butler, the Aus-

tralian UN weapons inspection team leader. Mr. Lavrov, according to U.N. officials, asked Mr. Annan to expand the top level of UNSCOM and name a second deputy to Mr. Butler. His current sole deputy is Charles Duelfer of the U.S.

Diplomats said Russia felt left out of UNSCOM's political decision-making executive group. Two Russians are among the top experts in UNSCOM's units analysing chemical and ballistic weapons.

At the request of France, Mr. Butler recently appointed Eric Fournier, a disarmament official in its foreign ministry, to his executive offices which include a variety of nationalities. The British national in the group is John Scott, UNSCOM's legal advisor.

Lebanese child, militiamen injured in south Lebanon

RASHAYA (AFP) — A four-year-old Lebanese boy and two members of the Israeli-allied South Lebanon Army (SLA) were wounded Friday during bombardments in the Israeli-occupied border zone in south Lebanon.

The child, identified as Atef Ahmad Al Assad, received light wounds when glass shattered in his home in the village of Mashghara in the Syrian-controlled western Bekaa Valley of southeastern Lebanon, the police said. He was taken to a clinic in the area for treatment.

The Israeli mortar shelling also damaged three houses, an empty school bus and a civilian car in Mashghara.

The bombardment came after guerrillas of the Hizbollah attacked six SLA positions on the edge of the occupied zone.

Two SLA militiamen were also wounded Friday when Hizbollah guerrillas shelled SLA positions around the Christian enclave of Jezzine, the SLA-run Voice of the South

radio station said, without indicating exactly where the casualties occurred.

An SLA source had previously said that most of the Hizbollah fire was aimed at Bateh-Jezzine, one of the five crossing points linking the occupied zone with the rest of Lebanon.

A spokesman for the Hizbollah, which conducts most of the anti-Israeli attacks in south Lebanon, said in Beirut that the guerrillas used weapons of all calibres against SLA positions in Jezzine.

The Voice of the South also confirmed that an SLA armoured personnel carrier was damaged by the explosion of a landmine in Haddatha at the edge of the border area, without inflicting casualties.

However, security sources said the vehicle, an M-113, was partially destroyed by the explosion of a remotely controlled explosive charge.

The attack was claimed in a statement from the Islamic Resistance, Hizbollah's mili-

tary wing. Israeli aircraft also launched air raids on Hizbollah positions near Jezzine, military officials in Jerusalem said, adding that the aircraft returned safely after hitting their targets.

A Hizbollah spokesman in Beirut confirmed the Israeli air strike, the 11th this year into Lebanon, and said it inflicted casualties among the guerrilla group's ranks.

"Fighter-bombers fired six air-to-ground missiles on hills south of the western Bekaa Valley," he said.

Israeli artillery and the SLA responded by attacking ravines sheltering the guerrillas, Lebanese police said.

The SLA, created and financed by Israel, controls Jezzine and its environs, while the Israeli army is deployed along a wide border zone to protect the Israeli's northern territory from attack.

Since the beginning of the year, two SLA militiamen were killed and nine others wounded by Hizbollah attacks.

Syria hands over more Lebanese prisoners

ANJAR (AFP) — Syria handed over some 20 Lebanese prisoners to the authorities here Friday, a day after it turned over around 100 others who had been detained in Syria since the 1975-1990 civil war, witnesses said.

The prisoners were taken from the border checkpoint at Masnaa to Syrian intelligence headquarters in Anjar in the Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley in Lebanon where they were delivered to Lebanese military police.

Lebanese officials had announced Wednesday that about 130 Lebanese nationals would be released within 48 hours.

Some 25 other Lebanese who were tried and found guilty of spying for Israel will remain in prison in Syria, government officials said earlier.

The transfers were announced following a telephone conversation between Lebanese President Elias Hrawi and his Syrian counterpart, Hafez Al Assad.

Before the Lebanese military frees the detainees, they are expected to appear in court to ensure that they are not wanted for offences in Lebanon, a judicial source said.

Human rights groups such as Amnesty International and the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues have been demanding the release of Lebanese nationals they said were arbitrarily imprisoned in Syria.

Amnesty estimates the number at 200. Syria is the dominant force in Lebanon and has 35,000 troops stationed on three-quarters of Lebanese territory.

Israelis want greater diplomatic effort on Lebanon pullout — poll

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Most Israelis want the government to step up diplomatic efforts to obtain the withdrawal of Israeli troops from south Lebanon, but a large majority oppose a unilateral pullout, according to opinion polls published on Friday.

A survey published in the Yediot Ahronot newspaper found that 63 per cent of those queried felt that the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was doing "nothing" or "not enough" to get Israeli troops out of Lebanon.

A second poll in the rival Maariv newspaper found that 73 per cent of Israelis opposed a unilateral decision to withdraw without security agreements with Lebanon and Syria.

Only 22 per cent supported an unconditional pullout from the buffer zone Israel occupies in south Lebanon.

The surveys were conducted after Mr. Netanyahu announced early this week that Israel was willing to implement a 20-year-old U.N. resolution calling for a withdrawal from Lebanon on condition that Beirut protect Israel's northern border from attack by Palestinian and Islamist guerrillas.

Mr. Netanyahu's initiative was prompted by rising Israeli casualties in Lebanon which have sparked growing calls for a unilateral withdrawal. Israel first invaded Lebanon in 1978 and pulled back to its self-declared "security zone" in 1985.

Past Israeli policy on Lebanon linked a withdrawal to security agreements with both Lebanon and Syria, which has some 30,000 troops in Lebanon and is viewed as the only power capable of reining in anti-Israeli guerrillas.

Mr. Netanyahu and his defence minister, Yitzhak Mordechai, were discussing the new ideas on Lebanon during separate visits to Europe which began Thursday.

Mr. Mordechai was discussing the proposal with officials in France, seen as the key address for any dealings with Beirut due to its close traditional ties to Lebanon.

Many Israeli analysts and some members of government have criticised the notion that a pullout deal could be worked out with Lebanon alone.

Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon, a hardline former defence minister who ordered Israeli troops into Lebanon in 1982, complained that Mr. Netanyahu was promoting his initiative before it had even been discussed in the cabinet.

Israeli officials said the cabinet would discuss the issue after Mr. Netanyahu's return on Sunday.

Cook pledges to help restart Mideast peace

LONDON (AFP) — British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook announced in a speech late Thursday an intensive European effort to stimulate progress in the stalled Middle East peace process.

Britain, current holder of the rotating European Union presidency, believed firmly that the process set out in the Oslo agreements held the best prospects for a solution. Mr. Cook said, but he warned that "it will not work if either side tries to unpick the bits of the agreement they do not like."

Mr. Cook, who leaves next week for a Middle East tour, said there were key ways in which Europe can help get the peace process back on track.

"First, we can set out the immediate political decisions that are needed to unblock the peace process. Second, we can continue vital practical work

to give the process momentum. And third, we can give the process a helpful nudge in the right direction by increased diplomatic commitment."

Mr. Cook spelled out the steps London believed must be taken "to get the process back on track and restore trust between the parties."

"The Israelis must make substantial, credible and urgent further redeployments" of troops in the West Bank, coupled with a commitment by the Palestinians to a 100 per cent effort on security, he said.

In addition, he called for a halt to all expansion of Jewish settlements, the opening of the Gaza airport, Gaza industrial estate and southern free passage, and an agreement to begin work on the seaport.

Noting that the EU was the main supplier of financial aid to the region, with loans and grants totalling \$1.848 billion since 1993, he added: "We want to play a fuller role in the talks on these vital economic issues."

Mr. Cook said British Prime Minister Tony Blair had launched the European effort by writing to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and U.S. President Bill Clinton.

Mr. Blair would also be visiting the Middle East soon, he added.

Mr. Netanyahu said in Spain earlier Thursday that Europe, with its long experience in the Middle East, can help revive the peace process.

"Europe can do three things: assist the Palestinians economically," boost the multilateral negotiating track and engage in the permanent status negotiations, he said.

Israel's Barak in trouble over 'terrorist' remark

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel's opposition leader Ehud Barak faced a flood of criticism on Friday over remarks seized on by his rivals as seeming to legitimise Palestinian violence.

Mr. Barak, elected Labour Party leader only last year and relatively new to politics, talked himself into trouble on Thursday night when asked on a television chat show what he would have done with his life had he been born a Palestinian.

"If I was at the right age, at some stage I would have entered one of the terror

organisations and have fought from there, and later certainly have tried to influence from within the political system," he replied.

Though Mr. Barak called the question unfair, his reply was front-page news in Israel on Friday along with bitter condemnation from Labour's enemies in the ruling right-wing Likud and other political parties.

"If this is so then Barak gives legitimacy to Palestinians to kill Jews," Agriculture Minister Rafael Eitan told the Yediot Achronot newspaper. Former Likud Prime Min-

ister Yitzhak Shamir, leader of the pre-state Lehi underground movement that fought British rule in Palestine, told Israel Radio Mr. Barak's statement was "propaganda to join a terrorist organisation."

Mr. Barak took to Israel's air waves early on Friday to try to contain the fallout.

He told Channel Two television that the Netanyahu government's failure to advance peace-making with the Palestinians was bolstering "terrorist organisations" rather than "my remarks in a personal interview."

Some commentators said Mr. Barak's initial remarks were especially unfortunate on a day Israel announced the arrest of five suspected members of the Islamist group Hamas in connection with two suicide bombings in Jerusalem last year.

Others said the remark would raise even more doubts about Mr. Barak's political savvy.

Mr. Barak, a former army chief of staff and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's likely challenger at the next general election, has been in politics less than three years.

Maariv quoted an unnamed Labour official as saying Mr. Barak's remarks were "frank but not too smart."

Defending himself, Mr. Barak told Israel Radio there was a huge difference between the Palestinian struggle and the struggle of Jews in Palestine waged 50 years ago to create a state.

"Along with this... if a person with the nature and genes of Yitzhak Shamir had been born in Acre to a Palestinian mother, I have no doubt that he wouldn't have sold bottles of pop in a grocery store," he said.



REVOLUTIONARY ART: A girl watches Palestinian artist Adnan Zubaidi harness the power of the sun Friday to burn the images of Che Guevara and Fidel Castro onto plywood while sitting outside his Bethlehem souvenir shop (AP photo)

Turkish army warns against concessions to Islamists

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey's powerful pro-secular army has criticised Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz for lifting a ban on Islamic headscarves in religious schools and warned the government against making concessions to the Islamists, a newspaper reported Friday.

"They [the Islamists] are testing the determination of the Turkish state. If concessions are made, they will only think that they are gaining ground," the Istanbul daily Yeni Yuzul quoted a senior military official as saying.

"The headscarf issue should also be considered in this respect. There should be no compromise," the official said, in apparent criticism of Mr. Yilmaz's recent move to allow female students to wear Islamic headscarves.

Secular Education Minister Hikmet Uygur in February banned the Islamic headscarf

in state-run religious high schools. But after public protests by Islamist groups throughout Turkey, Mr. Yilmaz last Monday abolished Mr. Uygur's decree.

Conservative Mr. Yilmaz's move also followed a split in his three-party coalition government between right-wingers in his Motherland Party and the nationalist Democratic Left Party, to which Mr. Uygur belongs.

The government "should not behave in a way just to look sympathetic to radical voters," the military official told the newspaper, adding: "Such an attitude has dangerously hurt the secular regime in the past."

The army generals last year played a vital role in forcing the Islamist-led government of then Premier Necmettin Erbakan to resign. Mr. Erbakan was replaced by Mr.

Yilmaz last June.

A Constitutional Court order dissolving Mr. Erbakan's pro-Islamic Welfare Party took effect on Feb. 22 and the ex-premier lost his parliamentary seat and was barred from politics for five years.

But following the closing down of Welfare, the largest party in parliament, on charges that it had undermined the secular regime, the party's MPs regrouped under a newly-formed Islam-based entity, the Virtue Party.

On Thursday, the renewed Islamist movement once again became the largest group with 140 deputies in the 550-seat parliament and immediately launched its first major political campaign, seeking Mr. Uygur's ouster. In a joint appeal, four right-wing opposition parties, led by Virtue, called for a vote of

no-confidence in the education minister, accusing him of violating religious freedoms.

Parliament is expected to hold a vote next week on whether to include the issue in its urgent agenda.

Mr. Yilmaz's government is a minority coalition and desperately needs the backing of a left-wing party generally supporting it from outside.

Political analysts said Mr. Uygur's fate and the coalition's future would depend on whether right-wing deputies in Motherland would support the censure motion.

Mr. Erbakan, who became the country's first Islamist prime minister in summer 1996, stepped down last June following strong pressure by the powerful pro-secular army, which was angered by what it saw as creeping Islamisation during Welfare's rule.

Israeli general apologises for 'Nazi' comments

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An Israeli reserve general apologised on Friday for comparing nationalist Jewish settlers to Nazis.

General Shlomo Gazit made the public apology after saying during a speech at Tel Aviv University the previous day that the knitted skullcaps worn by the settlers serving in the army reminded him of "the armbands with a swastika that German soldiers wore."

The comments created a stir during his talk and Gen. Gazit immediately retracted them. He later telephoned President Ezer Weizman and public radio to apologise.

"I only wanted to explain my opposition to the fact that soldiers wear distinctive signs like knitted kippas as a sign of their political affiliation," the general told the radio.

The general said he would also object if left-wing militants wore peace symbols on their uniforms.

Gen. Gazit's comments were strongly condemned by army chief of staff General Amnon Shahak, Mr. Weizman and the head of the Jewish Agency.

Ultra-Orthodox Jews wear black kippas and do not serve in the army.

Nationalist religious Jews do serve in the military, and they have gained increasing influence in the army's officer class in recent years.

EU official regrets Turkish-Cypriot refusal to take part in EU accession talks

NICOSIA (AFP) — The European Union's external affairs commissioner, Hans Van den Broek, said Friday he regretted the Turkish-Cypriot refusal to take part in Cyprus's upcoming membership talks with the European Union.

"The Turkish Cypriots are asked to accept that a common future is better than one in isolation," he said.

The EU accession talks are scheduled to begin at the end of March, despite protests from Turkey and the Turkish-Cypriot authorities on the north of the divided island.

"We hope by the time the negotiations start, right signals

have reached the north and Ankara" Mr. Van den Broek told a news conference in Nicosia, adding that the accession talks would nevertheless continue.

The European Union has made it clear that it wants Turkish-Cypriot participation in the membership talks.

However, Turkey and Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash are staunchly opposed to Cyprus's admission into the EU before a political solution to end the island's 24-year division or before Ankara itself joins the bloc.

Mr. Denktash has refused to meet Mr. Van den Broek dur-

ing his trip.

Mr. Van den Broek said leaders of the internationally recognised republic of Cyprus are expected to give the EU an "interesting" offer March 15 on Turkish-Cypriot participation in the negotiations.

"The government here is very much dedicated to seriously considering how Turkish-Cypriot interests can be respected in negotiations and that attitude encourages us," he said.

The EU commissioner, who arrived in Cyprus Wednesday night, has held talks with Cypriot President Glafos Clerides, Foreign Minister

Yiannakis Cassoulides and former President George Vassiliou, who is in charge of the EU accession negotiations. He is scheduled to leave Cyprus later Friday. U.N. special envoy Diego Cordovez is due here March 16 for talks on settling the island's division, while Mr. Clerides is due to meet British Prime Minister Tony Blair next Thursday.

Cyprus has been divided since Turkey invaded the north in 1974 in response to a Greek-Cypriot coup in Nicosia aimed at uniting the island with Greece, and the Turkish Cypriots declared a breakaway state in 1983.

Gunman who killed seven in Egyptian village dies in police shootout

MINYA (AFP) — A gunman who killed seven people in an Egyptian village earlier this week to revenge the deaths of his relatives died Friday in a shootout with police in the same village, police officials said.

The death of Eid Abu

Bakr Abdul Rahim, who also wounded nine others in his rampage Tuesday through the village of Mo'sserat Ajjaj in the southern province of Minya, was greeted with cries of joy by the villagers, witnesses said.

Abdul Rahim stormed

through the village earlier this week dressed as a woman, opening fire on residents outside their homes to avenge the deaths of his two brothers and a cousin killed in a police raid on his hideout in February.

Police said Abdul Rahim

has been wanted by the authorities since May 1995, when he took part in clashes pitting members of his family against the rest of his village, some 250 kilometres south of Cairo.

A total of 24 people have been killed since vil-

lagers refused demands by Abdul Rahim that they pay him protection money.

In February, he kidnapped and then executed in front of their families two villagers who refused to become his accomplices.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iranian cleric calls for translation of Garmeh's book

TEHRAN (AFP) — An Iranian conservative Islamic cleric called Friday for a French book playing down the Nazi extermination of the Jews in World War II to be translated into Persian and Arabic as a "counterweight" to the Palestinian cause.

"A movement of the book, be translated into Persian and Arabic so that Muslims, who are aware of Israel's oppression, will read it," Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati said, referring to the "Founding Myths of Israeli Policy," a 1996 book by French Muslim writer Roger Garaudy. "This is a great service to the oppressed Muslim minority of Palestine," he said in a sermon before the weekly Friday prayers at Tehran University.

Turkey pledges to contribute troops if NATO sends force to Kosovo

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish Defence Minister Ismet Sezen said Friday that Ankara would be ready to contribute troops if NATO decides to send a force to the troubled Serbian province of Kosovo. "If NATO forms a force to provide peace there in Kosovo, we would take part in that force," Mr. Sezen told the Anadolu news agency. Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz said separately that his Foreign Minister, Ismail Cem, would travel to Belgrade in the next few days to meet Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic to promote a peaceful solution to the Kosovo conflict.

Turkish army kills seven Kurdish rebels

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish army troops killed seven separatist Kurdish rebels on a clash Thursday in the country's troubled southeast, government officials said Friday. The fighting between the troops and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which took place in a mountainous area in Diyarbakir province, the southeast's regional headquarters, said in a written statement. It said two other PKK rebels and four soldiers were injured, but made no mention of Turkish casualties.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO

16:10Cartoon — Sandokan

16:30French Programmes

18:00Square One TV

18:30Drama — Neighbours

19:00Le Journal

19:15French Programme

19:30News headlines

19:35 Quiz Show — You Bet Your Life

20:00Cinema, Cinema

20:30Prism

21:10Drama — Time Trax

22:00News in English

22:30Feature film: "Children of Darkness"

23:59Comedy — "The Respected Family"

00:30End of T.V.

PRAYER TIMES

04:36Fajr

05:53(Sunrise) Dhuhr

11:47Dhuhr

15:06Asr

17:41Maghreb

18:57Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church

Sweilieh, Tel. 5920740

Assemblies of God Church Tel.

4632785

St. Joseph Church Tel.

4634590

Terra Sancta Church Tel.

4622366

Anglican Church Tel.

4624853/4624811

St. Athanasius Orthodox Church Tel.

771751

Amman International Church Tel.

865897

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel.

5688404

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel.

811295

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel.

4654932

St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel.

5661757

Church of the Annunciation Tel.

4637440

Greek Orthodox Church Tel.

4623541

Church of Presentation, Sweilieh Tel.

5920146

The Uniate Catholic Church Tel.

4624757

The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel.

4614190

Evangelical Free Church Tel.

892679

The Baptist Church Tel.

4628052

The Armenian Catholic Church Tel.

771331

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Temperatures are expected to drop slightly during the next 48 hours, skies partly cloudy with a chance of scattered showers particularly in the northern parts of the Kingdom, and winds northerly moderate to active. In Aqaba, it will be dusty, skies partly cloudy to sunny, winds northerly moderate to active, and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman05/16

Aqaba13/24

Deserts04/17

Jordan Valley13/23

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 20 Aqaba 28 Humidity readings: Amman 25 per cent, Aqaba 20 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Bassam Karadshah 4389200

Dr. Rami Mazzawi894788

Dr. Salman Daboubi776751

Dr. Khalid M'adhi5661144

Firas pharmacy5661912

Ferdows pharmacy778336

Al Asena pharmacy4637055

Nairotch pharmacy4623672

Al Salam pharmacy4636730

Yacoub pharmacy4644945

Shmeisani pharmacy4637660

Najib pharmacy847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ghazi Ta'ammeh250080

Al Qada pharmacy(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Samir Al Lawzi989601

Khalifeh pharmacy985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111

Civil Defence Department5661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue4630341

Civil Defence Emergency199

Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777

Fire Brigade4617101

Blood Bank775121

Highway Police843402

Traffic Police896390

Public Security Dept.4630321

Hotel Complaints5605800

Price Complaints5661176

Water & Sewage Complaints 897467

Amman Municipality Complaints787111

Telephone Information (directo-

ry assistance)121

Overseas Calls010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs4623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101

Jordan Television773111

Radio Jordan774111

Water Authority5680100

J. Electricity Authority815615

Electric Power Co.4636381

RJ Flight Information, 44-53200

Queen Alia Int. Airport, 44-53200

Amal Hospital5674155

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital

(09)983323

Zarqa National Hospital

(09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital(09)986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital

(09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital

(02)275555

Greek Catholic Hospital

(02)272275

Ibn Al Nafes Hospital

(02)347100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital

(03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

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Decision to allow religious tourists longer stays welcomed by trade chamber federation

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Interior Ministry's recent decision to allow Muslim pilgrims a chance to stay in Jordan for a visit while in transit to Mecca was welcomed Friday by Haidar Murad, chairperson of the Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Trade.

The move is certain to help revive the economic and trade sectors in the Kingdom and reflect the government's desire to offer the pilgrims a chance to visit relatives and religious sites, said Mr. Murad.

Minister of Interior Nahir Rashid Wednesday announced that Muslim pilgrims in transit to Mecca can remain in the Kingdom for as long as they need to visit the country's holy shrines.

He did not specify if the decision applies to any particular Arab and Islamic countries.

The decision makes it possible for Muslims to make excursions to the burial sites of the Prophet Mohammad's companions and visit relatives and friends, as well as shop in

local markets, thus stimulating their activities, according to Mr. Murad.

He said the facilities offered to the pilgrims in the Kingdom and the Ministry of Interior's decision reflect the government's interest in stimulating local markets and offering pilgrims a chance to buy both necessary items and gifts for relatives at home from Jordanian stores.

He expressed hope that the move will help end the economic recession that has for some time been affecting the

commercial sector.

Before the decision, Muslim pilgrims, including those coming from the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel, were allowed to stay overnight only.

The announcement followed close on the heels of the ministry's instructions to the Jordanian embassy in Tehran to facilitate the entry of Iranian tourists into Jordan.

Earlier reports indicated that 20,000 Iranians have visited Jordan in the past four months.

Regent urges development council to formulate basis to develop civic society

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, has urged the Jordanian Development Council to lay down the basis for the development of civic society in Jordan and the achievement of prosperity for all Jordanians.

Addressing the council's meeting held at the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) on Thursday, the Crown Prince urged its members to remain in touch with civic organisations, including the chambers of industry and commerce, in the course of attaining sustainable development.

Calling for a comprehensive effort to realise these goals, the Regent said development cannot be achieved without involving the financial markets in a genuine interaction with the other sectors.

Prince Hassan drew the council's attention to the need for the development of the badia region of Jordan, noting that the badia attracts attention as a potential source of production.

But, he said, the development of the badia in Jordan can be no means be achieved by traditional methods. He stated that there is need for a concerted and well-coordinated response to the requirements of the region's comprehensive development.

The Regent drew attention to three dimensions of comprehensive planning: the region's population, involving relevant migration, labour, education and



HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, addresses the Jordanian Development Council on Thursday. The Regent called for a comprehensive effort to achieve sustainable development (Photo by Yusef 'Allan')

poverty issues; water and mineral resources; and livestock and agricultural wealth.

Referring to the government's role, the Regent said state intervention is needed to safeguard civic society within the framework of the law. He stressed the need for continued dialogue on and efforts to link the development of the northern, central and southern regions of the country.

Prince Hassan urged the council members to give due attention to the need for maximising investments of savings and promoting the functions of the Social Security Corporation, the

Orphans Fund and the Zakat Fund in this respect.

CBJ Governor Ziyad Fariz presented a comprehensive review of the bank's policies and plans to develop Jordan's banking system, the market's capital, and the country's monetary policies to stabilise the economy.

He said the CBJ is striving to develop the banking system and has invited international investors to acquire shares in Jordanian banks for this purpose.

Dr. Fariz announced that at the end of March, the CBJ will announce a new draft law on banks in Jordan, defining specific rules to be adopted and respected

by all banks to ensure the continuation of their success.

The Regent's meeting with the council followed his tour Wednesday of a number of badia districts in eastern Jordan.

In his tour, the Regent inspected army units, with whom he reviewed Jordan's endeavours in helping contain the U.N.-Iraq crisis.

The Regent later met tribal leaders, to whom he voiced the Jordanian leadership's continued interest in developing their region.

He also inspected natural gas fields and the Karameh border post near the Jordanian-Iraqi border.

Health minister returns from meetings in Syria

RAMTHA (Petra) — Minister of Health and Medical Care Ashraf Kurdi returned Friday from an official visit to Syria during which he took part in a meeting of Arab health ministers.

Dr. Kurdi said the conference discussed health insurance issues and the strategic development of health care programmes, as well as the availability of Arab-produced medicine.

Meanwhile, Iraqi Minister of Health Omid Midhat on Friday told the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that Iraq has signed contracts with several Jordanian pharmaceutical companies.

Dr. Midhat said Jordan and Iraq are currently cooperating in a number of scientific fields, adding that a Jordanian medical team will head to Iraq to offer services to the Iraqi people and deliver lectures on the latest developments in the field of medicine and health care.

Also Friday, visiting Yemeni Minister of Health Abdullah Abdul Wali Nasser told Petra that his visit three-day visit will focus on developing bilateral health cooperation.

Joining unions seen as first step toward increasing women's political clout

This is the fourth in a series of five articles the Jordan Times will publish leading up to International Women's Day, observed on March 8.

By Francesca Cirialed
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Though one of the highest in the Arab World, the level of women's political participation in Jordan needs to be enhanced, starting with participation in the professional unions, women and women's activists say.

"I highly and truly recommend encouraging women to join syndicates and become board members," said Senator Subhiyyah Ma'ani.

According to Ms. Ma'ani, who is also a pioneering entrepreneur and a successful businessperson, women should gradually climb up the political ladder.

"If you look at dentists, doctors, or lawyers, you would find many women in those professions, but not as many in those professions' unions."

"We seem to be more on the receiving side than on the giving one," she said in a recent interview with the Jordan Times.

"Many women have political minds, they read and analyse what is taking place locally, regionally and internationally. But may be they expect men to come and ask them to join their unions and their parties, rather than taking the initiative and introducing themselves or establishing their own parties."

Or, perhaps lack of funds or organisation prevent women from being more politically active, she added.

The highest rate of women membership in unions in the Kingdom is currently in the Jordan Press Association

(JPA), where women journalists account for 15 per cent of total membership.

In the Jordan Bar Association (JBA), female lawyers account for only nine per cent of the total members (376 registered women, out of 3,370 members).

In the other 11 professional unions, the percentages of women members are even lower.

Despite only a single woman deputy in its history — opposition leader Toujan Faisal, a member of the previous Parliament — Jordan still stands out among other Arab countries for its women's participation in politics.

According to the U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), there has been one woman deputy in Lebanon, and less than a dozen between Egypt, Iraq and Syria.

In order to increase women's representation in Parliament, the Jordanian women's movement stands united in favour of a women's quota in the Lower House and recently launched a campaign to collect one million signatures asking for the allocation of 20 per cent of the Lower House's 80 seats to women.

Women activists say that so far the campaign has been successful, though they have not set a deadline for their initiative.

Many women, who were against the quota principle in the beginning, now agree that the introduction of a women's quota seems indispensable in overcoming traditional and cultural factors hindering their full and active participation in political life.

After the disappointing results of last November's general elections, in which none of

the 17 women running in the electoral race made won a seat, all 80 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in Jordan in the field of women's development are united for the first time in supporting the women's quota, noted Salwa Nasser, coordinator for NGOs at the Jordanian National Committee for Women (JNCW).

"The quota seems now the only way for women to reach Parliament in the year 2001," Ms. Nasser said.

Though they are now equal in front of the elections law, Jordanian women only won their right to vote in 1974.

A temporary "positive discrimination," to be introduced for three consecutive elections, has proven successful in many other countries, such as India and Pakistan, they point out.

Women's participation in political parties has also been fairly limited, apart from one woman in the 120-member Shura Council of the Islamic Action Front (IAF) — Nawal Fa'ouri — and the rare exception of the Jordanian Communist Party (JCP), in which women fill at least 20 per cent of all posts in the higher committees.

In addition to Ms. Ma'ani, two other women were appointed by His Majesty King Hussein in the 40-member Upper House, last November. They are former Minister of Information Leila Sharaf and current Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf.

"Women have to work hard and lobby in order to convince people that they are as good as men in politics," said Ms. Ma'ani.

"Once they will get their place in politics, it will be by merit and not by enforcement."

Two women shot to death in Amman

AMMAN (J.T.) — Two murders were committed Thursday in Amman, one occurring in the Jabal Al Marrikh district and the other downtown near Al Hussein Mosque, according to a report in the local press Friday.

The report said a 26-year-old man, identified by the police as S.A.M., shot his 17-year-old sister four times in her house in Jabal Al Marrikh, killing her instantly.

The woman was killed less than an hour after being released on bail after a brief detention by police on suspicion of committing an immoral offence, according to the report. It added that her brother immediately surrendered to the police, who are investigating the case.

The report said the second crime was committed by a 20-year-old man, identified by the police as Y.A.K., who shot his 17-year-old wife to death while she was in a store near Al Hussein Mosque. The police apprehended the suspect and are conducting an investigation.

Government expresses concern over killings in Kosovo

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan has expressed concern over the ongoing disturbances in the Kosovo province of Serbia and said it was in contact with other nations and organisations to defuse tension there.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Jawad Anani Thursday said His Majesty King Hussein and HRH Crown Prince Hassan have both voiced their deep concern over the developments in Kosovo, where the Muslim majority are exposed to attacks by the Serbian authorities.

"The Jordanian government shares the pain and sorrow of the families of the 24 Muslims who were

killed by Serbian police while asking for their rights," said Dr. Anani in a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

He said the Foreign Ministry, acting upon directives from the King and the Crown Prince, has been in contact with the U.N., the Arab League, the Organisation of Islamic Conference, the European Union, and the governments of the U.S., Britain, Russia, France, Iran and Turkey over this issue.

Jordan denounces such killings of civilians and is ready to cooperate with all concerned parties to ending the crisis and prevent further bloodshed, he said.

Dr. Anani said a number

of countries have expressed understanding of and response to the Jordanian stand, which is aimed at finding a just and durable settlement to the Kosovo problem.

Many countries have expressed readiness to cooperate with Jordan in order to find a peaceful end to the crisis, he added.

According to Dr. Anani, Israel, the U.S., Britain, Turkey, France and Iran have responded positively to the Jordanian stand.

Meanwhile, international pressure was reported to be mounting on Belgrade to avoid further bloodshed and accommodate demands for a restoration of Kosovo's autonomy.

what's going on

'Ultra-marathon' set for next month

By Ahmad Khatib
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan's Society for Care of Neurological Patients (SCNP) and the Amman Road Runners (ARR) Thursday announced that the Sixth Amman-Dead Sea Ultra Marathon (DSUM) has been scheduled for April 3, 1998.

HRH Prince Firas, head of the SCNP, told a press conference that the marathon, held annually under the patronage of HRH Prince Ra'd, is designed to attract professional and semi-professional runners from all parts of the world.

He said the event seeks to fulfil a number of important goals, including supporting competitive sports, promoting Jordan's tourism sector, and consolidating the humanitarian outlook of society.

"The marathon's revenues will go to the SCNP," said Prince Firas. "It will promote the tourism potential of Jordan by inviting foreign athletes to run to the lowest point on earth and allowing them to explore our country's antiquities. We hope to create an athletic tradition by

such events."

"This Ultra-marathon is considered to be the biggest one in the Middle East," said Pascal Hoyez, an ARR member. "Our policy is to promote this event all over the world. We have a Web site, and many contacts with a large number of news agencies, especially in Britain and Germany."

The 50-kilometre marathon will start at 6:30 a.m. from south Amman and will take runners on a paved course to a point lower by 1,300 metres. It is being sponsored primarily by Radisson SAS Hotel Amman and LG Electronics (LGE).

The organisers have asked foreign embassies to announce and promote the event in their countries.

They have also requested all runners, whether individuals or groups, to secure sponsorship dues from local companies prior to the event.

The SCNP is a non-governmental organisation which was established in 1986 under the patronage of honorary President HRH Crown Prince Hassan.

Graphic arts expo recalls advertising images

By Omar Karmi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — There were only four other people at the "Spanish Contemporary Graphic Arts" exhibition at Instituto Cervantes, near the Third Circle, yesterday.

The four Spanish schoolgirls rushed around, had a good laugh and left. What was so humorous was not immediately obvious.

Contemporary graphic arts has found an ever-expanding outlet in printed advertisements and commercials, to the improvement of the latter, but the detriment of the former. No matter how adverts are presented, they will always be selling products, and any object of art

associated with selling products will immediately lose some of its value (the notable exception being pop-art). There is no pop-art exhibited at Cervantes, but many pieces

REVIEW

could have been derived from the world of advertising. Maria Luisa Sanz's paintings were reminiscent of a 1980's Bacardi advertising campaign. Santiago Serrano's looked like a poster for the "X-Files" (and seemed to send the girls into fits of giggles), and the paintings by one of the guest artists of honour, Gerardo Rueda, strangely resembled a campaign by the Danish post office not so long ago.

All the paintings exhibited were produced by Spanish artists within the last 20 years. Two artists were invited as guests of honour, Mr. Rueda and Antonio Lorenzo.

Mr. Lorenzo's paintings were the main feature of the exhibition, with some justification. Monty Pythonesque, in nature, they featured colourful geometric shapes juxtaposed with child-like sketches and line drawings, and outlandish inventions and flying machines. To complete the Terry Gilliam connection, there was the odd sawn-over naked woman added here and there. The paintings had a childish imagination about them, that made them both charming and interesting.

There were other high spots. Lola Del Castillo's paintings hung just outside the hall, in the natural light, whose "grainy" quality made the detail life-like, and Yolanda Del Riego's dainty colourful representations of leaves and trees was worth the time.

Overall though, the compulsion was to follow the girls in rushing around and leaving. Monir's slightly pompous "Through the Prism of Time" and Maria Gomez' star constellations were not really lingering over, nor were Jose Manuel Ciria's paintings, which looked like Rorschach blots in colour.

But I'm still wondering — what was so funny?

COPEX JORDAN
28-30-APRIL 98
Amman, Jordan

The Jordanian Armed Forces

represented by

The Special Operations Command
in cooperation with Copex International
will be holding

The Second Contingency Operational Procurement Exhibition
(COPEX Jordan 98)

at
King Abdullah Air Base - Marka/Amman
between 28th-29th of April 1998.

As a buildup on the success gained from the previous show (COPEX Jordan 96), many countries will be participating in this event through their official delegates and their international representative companies, specialised in military and security equipment manufacturing. Exhibitors will be showing the latest in military special operations and law enforcement equipment including specialised ordnance. Taking advantage of the major international participation we expect many local companies exhibition to display their expertise and our national capability in these product areas.

For more details, please contact

the Organisational Committee of COPEX Jordan 98
Tel.: 810977, 817625, Fax: 859615, 824878.

Germany calls for U.N. to address Kosovo crisis

BONN (AFP) — Germany called Friday for the U.N. Security Council to address the crisis in Kosovo as Serbian security forces press on with an offensive against Albanian rebels in that province.

"Given the danger of the Kosovo conflict jeopardising peace and stability in the region, the Security Council must immediately take up the issue," Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said. He said he had made a request to this effect to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and the current president of the council.

Mr. Kinkel proposed a series of measures to keep the conflict from worsening:

— an extension of the mandate of a U.N. military observer team in neighbouring Macedonia;

— a strengthening of the Western European Union military presence in Albania; the WEU is essentially the defence arm of the European Union;

— an early meeting of regional foreign ministers with those of the "contact group" (Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States);

— a new Balkans mission by former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez, a special envoy of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Mr. Kinkel also warned Kosovo's pro-independence forces against resorting to terrorism, saying violence would not serve their cause.

And he served notice to Belgrade that its hopes of ending its international isolation "depend on its attitude towards Kosovo." He called for "restraint and willingness to compromise."

Friday, Serbian forces pressed ahead with an offensive against ethnic Albanians, a day after killing at least 50 of them in Kosovo province, ethnic Albanian sources said here Friday.

The new death toll in the village of Prekaz, in the Drenica region, was given by the Kosovo Information Centre in Pristina, capital of the troubled southern Serbian province.

"We fear that the members of the Shaban Jashari family, including several children, were killed" and their house was burned down, said a statement issued by the centre.

Prekaz was again shelled Friday after a dozen houses were destroyed or burned down there Thursday.

Friday Serbian forces tightened their siege of the village of Llausha near Prekaz, said the statement.

The centre also cited a source within the Democratic League of Kosovo as saying that they feared a "terrible massacre" as Serbian forces were advancing on Llausha at 9:00 a.m. (0800 GMT).

Women and children were almost alone in the village after most men left it overnight, they added.



Albanians are wrapped in their national flags during a demonstration for Kosovo Albanians in downtown Vienna. Demonstrators accused the Yugoslav government of terrorism in the troubled province, ninety per cent of whose people are ethnic Albanians. 50 Albanian men and six Serbian policemen have been killed in seven days of fighting in Kosovo (Reuters photo)

Cambodian strongman's party pushes for July elections

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Strongman Hun Sen's powerful Cambodian People's Party (CPP) called Friday for crucial national elections to be held on schedule in July saying any delay would bring "negative consequences."

Acting Head of State Chea Sim, the low-key president of the CPP, made the call while closing a four-day party plenum in the capital a day after a Philippine official in Manila said the July 26 polls might have to be delayed for technical reasons.

"The plenum was of the view that the elections should be held on 26 July as mandated by the electoral law," Chea Sim said. "Any postponement of that elections (in any) form would bring negative consequences to the nation."

On behalf of the CPP he appealed for the country's national electoral commission to ensure that the polls were held on schedule and urged parliament to pass any remaining electoral legislation as soon as possible. He also called on donor

countries to speed up the disbursement of funds necessary to pay for the \$21-million election.

The international community is being asked to pay for at least 60 per cent of the election but their aid is contingent upon the election and campaign being conducted in a free and fair environment.

The major concern is the ability of deposed co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh, whom Hun Sen effectively ousted last July, to return to Cambodia and participate in the election.

At a Friday meeting in Manila, the "Friends of Cambodia" group of nations which is leading the calls for the free and fair poll, said the situation in the country now did meet that condition.

The group called on the government to put an end to human rights abuses and political intimidation.

After discussions between members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) prior to the Friends of Cambodia meeting, Philippine Foreign

Undersecretary Lauro Baja raised the possibility of the election being postponed.

"There's a possibility that it will be postponed because of technical details," he said, adding however that no alternate date had been set and even with a delay the poll should be held by the end of the year.

The "Friends of Cambodia" initiative, coordinated by ASEAN, is pursuing a Japanese formula for the troubled nation which centres on a ceasefire and pardon for Prince Ranariddh.

ASEAN groups Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

The Friends of Cambodia meeting also included ministers and diplomats from Japan, the European Union, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, South Korea, New Zealand, Russia, Britain, the United States and the United Nations.

China, a member of the group, did not send any representative for the second time.

Chernomyrdin slams Latvia for humiliating Russians

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin slammed the Latvian authorities Friday for what he described as their "humiliation" of Russians living in the Baltic republic.

"I am indignant that in Europe at the end of the 20th century a whole nation is being humiliated. There can be no justifications in this case," Mr. Chernomyrdin told reporters.

Mr. Chernomyrdin also voiced outrage at remarks by Latvian Prime Minister Guntars Krasts, who said a pensioners' demonstration broken up by police in the republic's capital Riga Tuesday "could have been a Russian provocation."

"How can he stoop as low as to say such things? Our people were shaken, shocked to hear about the events in Latvia," Mr. Chernomyrdin said. "It's a pity they have such a prime minister in Latvia. I know I'm not supposed to say

such things, but I cannot help it. Such prime ministers lead their countries into such confrontations," he added.

The Russian premier was speaking on the sidelines of a heads of government meeting of the 12-nation Commonwealth of Independent States, a loose association of former Soviet republics. The three Baltic republics are not members.

Russia denounced the Latvian police intervention against Russian pensioners as a "violation of human rights," but the Latvian authorities defended the action, saying the demonstration was unauthorised and the pensioners had blocked a main road in the city centre.

Russia's lower house of parliament, the state Duma, Friday urged President Boris Yeltsin to take firm steps, including if necessary economic sanctions and political reprisals, in support of the almost one

million Russians living in Latvia.

"Following its declaration of independence (in 1991), the Latvian government has pursued the dangerous policy of building a mono-ethnic state, discriminating against and marginalising people whose mother tongue is Russian," the Duma text read, according to Interfax.

Deputies urged Mr. Yeltsin to act to ensure that ethnic Russians in Latvia are granted full political, social and economic rights.

The Baltic republics were annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 and did not regain independence until 1991, when the Soviet Union collapsed.

Ethnic Russians in Latvia and Estonia, often slighted as erstwhile Soviet occupiers, have repeatedly complained of being treated as second-class citizens in the republics.

Russians make up a third of Latvia's 2.5 million population.

Exiled Chinese dissidents plan mass attempt to return

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese dissidents in exile in the United States said Friday they plan to return to China by sending in "waves" of dissidents to set up their New York-based opposition party in the Communist country.

"In a bid to break the stranglehold the Communist Party of China has on the activities of minority parties, the CDJP plans to send waves (of dissidents) to try and breach the frontier and return to China," the China Democracy and Justice Party (CDJP) said.

"A very influential dissident will soon make an attempt to return to China," the New York-based party said in a faxed statement sent here to AFP.

CDJP spokesman, Wang Bingzhang, was himself arrested last month after entering China illegally. Mr. Wang, 50, entered China from Macau on Jan. 23, prompting a large-scale manhunt and a police order to arrest him since he was on a list of activists to be refused entry into China.

For 15 days he slipped through the net, meeting dissidents in Shanghai and Nanjing. He then moved north to Bengbu where he was caught and placed in detention on Feb. 6. He was deported back to the United States after three

days. Mr. Wang had not returned to China since 1978 when he went to Canada for postgraduate studies in medicine.

He subsequently went to the United States where he set up the first overseas dissident organisation in 1982 called "Alliance for Democratic China" and then published a magazine called "China Spring."

Mr. Wang was supposed to set up the party in China, but was arrested before doing so. Following his arrest other party leaders, Secretary General Fu Shenqi, and Wang Xizhe, who looks after external affairs, announced the formation of the CDJP in New York last month.

Announcing the forming of the party on Feb. 27, Mr. Fu said the headquarters was supposed to be based in China "but taking into account the present situation, it will be temporarily established abroad."

The new party, however, also announced last month "it had managed to set up a local clandestine organisation in Taiyuan city, capital of the northern Chinese province of Shanxi, which would 'prepare the path for a democratic revolution in China.'"

Mir coated with debris — NASA

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The exterior walls of the ageing Russian space station Mir are dirtier and more battered than space programme officials expected, a NASA scientist said Thursday.

As the platform followed its orbit, it was coated with dust and hit by numerous motionless objects, Project Manager Greg Stover of NASA's Langley Research Centre said.

Scientists are projecting that 70 per cent of the space junk clinging to Mir is manmade, such as bits of discarded satellites or rocket engine parts.

However, the origin of it will not be known until researchers examine the material collected from the exterior of Mir over 18 months in an experiment and brought back to Earth on a shuttle late last

year. The experiment consisted of four suitcase-sized boxes designed by NASA's Langley engineers.

Two of the boxes measured how much dust an orbiting spacecraft would encounter, while the other two tested the wear and tear on hundreds of types of materials, including paints, metals and glass.

"That shows there's a lot of particles moving faster than Mir is moving," Analysis of Mir's rubbish is expected to give a clearer picture of the bearing the International Space station will take when it goes into operation in 2002.

The U.S. Air Force, which monitors objects in space, tracked about 7,000 manmade objects, some of them as big as 30 centimetres across.

Yeltsin welcomes first Russian land sales in 80 years

MOSCOW (AFP) — President Boris Yeltsin Friday welcomed the first sale of land in Russia for 80 years and renewed his call for the Communist-dominated state Duma to allow small farmers to buy land.

The receipts from Thursday's auction in the town of Balakovo, 800 kilometres south-east of Moscow, "will go to the budget, so the Duma and the Federation Council (the lower and upper chambers of parliament) have an interest" in approving such a law, Interfax quoted Mr. Yeltsin as saying.

The regional assembly in the Volga region of Saratov, where Balakovo is situated, adopted a law in November allowing the sale of agricultural land for the first time since the Bolsheviks seized power in 1917.

Mr. Yeltsin insisted that he would not sign into law a land code which did not include the right to buy and sell land. "I will fight to the end, we have to return the land to small farmers," Mr. Yeltsin said.

Currently Russian small farmers "have not managed to win back their land," the president added, saying he hoped that would happen soon.

"Now we are close, we just have to push the legislators" into approving the measure, he said.

The Duma passed a property law in September that recognises in theory the right to private property, but does not allow for the sale of land, except for small individually-owned plots.

The Communists charge the right to sell would spark a wave of speculative land sales which would inflate prices and only benefit Russia's super rich.

Mr. Yeltsin refused to sign the bill, saying land reform was one of the last great reforms Russia must undergo to fully liberalise its economy.

Murdered lawyer's family settles damage suits against Aum cult

TOKYO (AFP) — The family of a Japanese lawyer murdered by the Aum Supreme Truth cult reached a 543 million yen (\$4 million) settlement Friday, court officials said.

"We have not forgiven the crime of the Aum. In fact, we don't really want to use the word settlement," Sachiyo Sakamoto, the mother of murdered lawyer Tsunemi Sakamoto, told a news conference.

"But we accepted the proposal to help speed up compensation payments to many other victims," Mrs. Sakamoto said.

Although the damages settlement calls for the payment of 543 million yen, the plaintiffs will receive less than 20 per cent of the amount because the Aum has become insolvent, according to a lawyer representing the families.

Members of the doomsday cult, have admitted to murdering Sakamoto, then 33, his 29-year-old wife Satoko and their one-year-old son Tatsuhiko in their home in Yokohama, south of Tokyo, in November 1995.

The lawyer at that time was supporting families

who had lost their offspring to the cult, which had communes in different parts of the country.

The Sakamotos had been reported missing for some six years, with police failing to link the family's disappearance with the cult.

Their bodies were recovered in mountains only after police raided the cult and arrested many of its members following the nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway in March 1995, which killed 12 and injured thousands.

"It was not compensation that we wanted. We spend everyday feeling like screaming that we want our son and his family back," the lawyer's mother told reporters.

The parents of the lawyer and his wife had filed the suit against the five Aum members who were allegedly involved in the killing, originally demanding 490 million yen in damages.

Some members of the Aum Supreme Truth sect have admitted releasing the Nazi nerve agent sarin in Tokyo's subways in March 1995, killing 12 people and injuring thousands.

Philippine leader orders kid-glove treatment on hostage-takers

DAVAO, Philippines (AFP) — Philippine President Fidel Ramos has ordered police to show maximum tolerance towards a group of prisoners who have taken five female prison staffers hostage, an official said Friday.

Dominador Calamba, director of the local office of the government's human rights commission, said he was told by an aide of Mr. Ramos that "the order is clear to let them go if they insist on going out. Definitely, there would be no firing against the hostage-takers" in order to avoid hurting the hostages.

Eight prisoners in the Davao Penal Colony, who have been convicted for crimes including murder, slipped out of their cells Thursday and broke into a reception and medical section of the prison, regional police head, Chief Superintendent Jose Lalisan said.

The prisoners, armed with weapons made from iron bars and kitchen utensils, seized the five civilian workers and demanded a vehicle be provided for them or they

will start killing the hostages one by one.

However, they apparently decided not to carry out this threat after the government sent several negotiators, including Mr. Calamba to speak to them.

Despite this, there was no sign that the government would provide them with a vehicle.

The hostage-takers, many of them Muslims, also made other demands including the building of a mosque in the prison and firing of the penal colony chief, Superintendent Jose Poblacion.

In Manila, Justice Secretary Silvestre Bello said they had complied with this demand and replaced the Davao colony head.

Mr. Calamba, who was allowed to meet with the hostage-takers in the penal colony, said the five women were in good condition and had not been harmed but many of them were crying especially when he was made to leave the area.

"We may not see each other again, sir," Mr. Calamba quoted one of the sobbing women as telling him.

Hacker crashes thousands of windows computers

SEATTLE (R) — An unknown hacker caused thousands of windows-based university and government computers to crash on the eve of senate testimony by Microsoft Corp. Chairman Bill Gates, authorities said Wednesday.

The Monday night attack affected nine of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's 10 major field offices as well as major universities, including the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the University of California at Berkeley.

"Basically, what happened is it locked the system," said Mike Mewhinney, a spokesman for the space agency's AMES research centre near Mountain View, California. "Obviously, it was something we were concerned about, and we stepped in to address it as soon as we learned about it."

While the attack did not cause any significant loss of data, users were confronted with the so-called "blue screen of death," which appears with an error message when windows crashes. The only solution was to restart the computer.

Jeffrey Schiller, network manager at MIT, said the malicious hacker exploited a bug in the windows 95 and Windows net operating systems known "Boink," "Teardrop II" or "New Tear."

At MIT, the attacker obtained a list of all computers connected to the Internet and then sent specific data packets calculated to overload the computers, causing a "denial of service."

The only computers not affected were those that had installed Microsoft-supplied patches or were running other operating systems, such as Apple Computer INC. AAPLO Macintosh Units.

Microsoft issued a statement on the Internet saying the vulnerability was "not a new issue" and recommending customers install patches — software fixes — available on its web site.

While there were no clues as to the identity of the attacker, victims pointed out it came just hours before Mr. Gates' testimony before the senate Judiciary Committee, where he defended the company against charges that it improperly exploits its vast market power.

MIT's Schiller, an expert in Internet security, said the incident underscores the vulnerability of networked computers to hostile attacks.

"What you're dealing with here is someone who is actively trying to find a way to make your programme misbehave," Mr. Schiller said. "To me the Internet is a hostile place, and we have to build our programmes to deal with that."

14 die in El Niño mudslide in Peru

LIMA (AFP) — Nine members of the same family and five other people were killed when a rock and mudslide buried parts of a northern Peruvian town, police said Thursday.

Heavy rains brought by the El Niño phenomenon have wreaked havoc in Peru, which catches the full force of the ocean current, with the death toll estimated to be around 200, according to President Alberto Fujimori.

Neighbours were able to extract only the bodies of three children from the rubble, police said.

Luis Francisco Gomez Otiniano, 40, his wife, her sister and the couple's six children were killed in the mudslide, said El Progreso Mayor Diomedes Venero.

Three men who were repairing a road died in a mudslide in the eastern department of Huanuco. A fourth died in the same department when a mudslide buried a peasant community, said Chapacra Mayor Fileno Davila.

The fourteenth death was just east of Lima. Paulino Caycho, 76, was swept away by a mudslide Wednesday, said the local national police.

Pakistani police arrest key suspects in terrorist strikes

LAHORE, Pakistan (AFP) — Pakistani police Friday said they have arrested key suspects in several terrorist attacks including the massacre of 25 people in a graveyard shooting here two months ago.

A senior official said police had arrested 10 people over the past few days in raids on different hideouts. They include Aziz Gujjar, who carried a one-million-rupee (about \$22,000) reward for his head.

The official said Mr. Gujjar was a top activist of an underground Muslim militant group, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, which has claimed responsibility for several attacks in Punjab province, including the murder of an Iranian national last year.

Three others linked to Lashkar-i-Jhangvi have also been arrested, he said. Calling it a "break-through," the official said he hoped police would succeed in smashing the Lashkar group headed by Riaz Basra, who remains in hiding.

The authorities immediately promoted three police officials including an Inspector Tariq Kamboh, who acting on a tip off, arrested Mr. Gujjar after a fist fight in Lahore.

The police official said security was tightened in Punjab and activities of suspicious people were closely monitored after the Jan. 11 massacre of 25 people during a Shiite religious ceremony at Mominpura graveyard here.

Police said the accused had "confessed" to their role in several killings including the murder of a Shiite poet, a medical practitioner and government officials.

Pakistan's most populous Punjab province is plagued by sectarian violence between militants of the Shiite and Sunni extremist factions.

The violence has claimed more than 250 lives since early last year.



U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (left) exchanges bilateral documents with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Hennady Udovenko (right) as Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma applauds during an official signing ceremony at the Presidential Palace (Reuters photo)

Indonesian students keep up pressure for sweeping reform

JAKARTA (AFP) — Thousands of protesting students Friday kept up pressure for immediate government reforms during campus rallies around the island of Java, witnesses and police said.

Thousands of students in the West Java city of Bandung jeered at security personnel preventing them from leaving their campuses. No incidents of violence or arrests were reported.

In Jakarta, some 400 students at the Christian University of Indonesia staged a rally on campus, demanding reforms and lower basic food prices, a witness said.

In Central Java, state university students in Semarang held a free speech forum on campus under the tight guard of police and soldiers, university staff members said.

The demonstrations were the latest in a series of escalating student rallies across the country, held to protest the rising prices of essential goods and to call for economic and political reform. Some of the rallies have also blamed Indonesian President Suharto and his government for the crisis gripping the country and called for the veteran leader to step aside.

An ongoing electoral assembly meeting in Jakarta is expected to return Mr. Suharto to office for a seventh consecutive five-year term next week. Authorities have banned public gatherings during the electoral committee meeting under way in Jakarta.

but have been tolerant of student protests as long as they remain on university grounds. Prices of essential goods here have soared following a ruined harvest due to prolonged drought and the drastic fall of the rupiah. Indonesia has agreed to wide-ranging economic reforms in return for a \$40 billion aid package from the International Monetary Fund. But critics both here and abroad say the government has been too slow and indecisive in implementing them.

In Bandung, thousands of students at the state Bandung Institute of Technology were prevented from leaving their campus shortly before noon by a heavy cordon of soldiers and policemen.

"The students organized a free speech forum inside their campus and wanted to take to the streets but security personnel from the police and the army," said Sergeant Major Sirwigny of the Coblong police, near the state university.

A female staff member at a mosque opposite the university said thousands of students from the institute took part in the protest in the West Java provincial capital. "They were shouting 'reforms immediately,' 'lower prices' and 'the people will win' when they could not leave the campus. But after a while they went back in," added the woman, who declined to identify herself.

Security forces have since reopened the street running between the campus and the mosque, she said. At the Christian University of Indonesia, hundreds of students marched around their East Jakarta campus and ended with a free speech forum to air their calls for reforms.

Some of the students also demanded that Mr. Suharto resign. Similar rallies were also held at the state Diponegoro University.

"They held a free speech forum at the Literature Faculty but they did not number very many," a university staff member who identified himself as Tugiman said.

"They aired the same demands but it proceeded orderly and they did not venture out of the campus as security was tight outside," Mr. Tugiman added.

The campus was the site earlier this week of similar rallies held to demand the government lower prices and engage in comprehensive reforms.

The state Gajah Mada University in Yogyakarta, where a two-kilometre long march of students and teachers clamoured for reforms, was quiet Friday, a university staff member said by telephone.

Nor were any activities reported on the two main campuses in Surabaya, East Java, where large rallies were staged earlier this week.

Albright urges students to nurture Ukrainian democracy

KIEV (AFP) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright Friday encouraged Kiev university students to vote in upcoming legislative elections, saying active participation would help "nurture democracy."

Mrs. Albright, making a brief visit to Kiev as part of a whirlwind European tour, told around 100 students at Kyi-Mohyla University that "America will stand with you but only you can insist on economic reforms and a free press."

Making her first official visit to Ukraine, she said: "The elections coming up are very important. Participation in the elections is an essential part of the democratic process."

"It should not take too long for Ukraine to become a fully democratic market system, but what is complicated is keeping the system

going," she said, adding: "It requires your daily care."

In response to students' questions Mrs. Albright reaffirmed Washington's position that "NATO is open to all democracies and free market economies," but added that "it is important for Ukraine to have good relations with Russia," which bitterly opposes Kiev's membership of the Western defence alliance.

During a meeting with Russian President Boris Yeltsin last week, Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma ruled out an application for NATO membership by Kiev, a senior Kremlin official said.

Mrs. Albright arrived in Ukraine early Friday for brief talks with Mr. Kuchma and government officials before flying onto Rome as part of a European tour.

The U.S. secretary of state was expected to put pres-

sure on Kiev to pull out of a contract to build a nuclear power station in Iran, and raise U.S. concerns about the investment climate in Ukraine and urge the authorities to settle a number of disputes with U.S. firms.

After Rome, Paris, Cologne in Germany, London, Madrid and Ottawa will be her next stops.

In Rome, Mrs. Albright will have talks Saturday with Pope John Paul II and Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini.

The stalled Middle East peace talks, Iraqi weapons inspections and the situation in Kosovo will be on the agenda in Mrs. Albright's talks with Dini.

At the Vatican, Mrs. Albright will discuss Cuba with the Pope after his visit there in January. There have been recent signs of a thaw

in the decades of extremely chilly relations between Washington and Havana.

Sunday will be a heavy day for Albright who will be in Paris, Cologne and London.

In London, she will attend a meeting late Monday of the "contact group" of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia and the United States on Yugoslavia and its former components.

The State Department also confirmed Thursday that Mrs. Albright would spend several hours in Madrid Monday to discuss Iraq with Spanish Foreign Minister Abel Matutes.

In Canada, her last stop, Mrs. Albright will discuss Iraq and other major international issues but also bilateral issues like disputes over salmon fishing in the Pacific.

She is expected back in Washington Tuesday.

Sri Lanka arrests bus-bomb owner as toll reaches 37

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sri Lanka arrested the Tamil woman owner of the bus used in a suicide bombing that killed 37 people here as policemen who tried to stop it were rewarded for bravery, officials said Friday.

Police made an early breakthrough by detaining the owner, Pushpa, and the male conductor, Kanthan, who were taken in at the eastern town of Eravur, 280 kilometres from here, officials said.

"The original owner had sold it about two years ago and left the country but we managed to get at the present owners because the vehicle engine serial number was available although the bus went to smithereens," an official said.

The defence ministry said the bus was driven by a suicide cadre or a Black Tiger of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) which is battling for an independent

homeland in the island's north-east.

Officials said police Subinspector N.A.R. Perera was promoted and given a reward of 300,000 rupees (\$5,000) Friday for pursuing the bus and forcing it to a halt before it managed to hit an undisclosed VIP target.

Mr. Perera had chased the bus for about a kilometre when the driver failed to stop after a traffic accident a short distance from where the explosion occurred.

"If not for his action to pursue, the bus would have reached its intended target and caused more damage," a police spokesman said, adding Mr. Perera was about to book the driver of the bus when the bomb went off in heavy traffic.

Mr. Perera survived the explosion but two other constables were killed as they approached the bus in bumper-to-bumper traffic Thursday during the lunch rush hour.

The two constables were also posthumously promoted and their families given half a million rupees (\$8,300) in compensation, police said.

At least 260 people were wounded and most motorists died trapped in their vehicles. Thirty two people died on Thursday and the toll rose to 37 by Friday afternoon, doctors said. Two school girls were among those killed.

The carnage on the streets prompted Transport Minister A.H.M. Fowzie to announce the authorities will now consider the security implications of massive traffic jams.

"There will have to be some sweeping restrictions on the number of private vehicles entering the city," a transport ministry spokesman quoted the minister as saying at a meeting with officials Thursday.

At least 40 vehicles were damaged when the explosives-

packed bus was detonated by a suicide bomber in the commercial area of Maradana during the lunch-time rush hour.

Traffic congestion in this city of one million people is compounded by the closure of several roads leading to key institutions or homes of VIPs vulnerable to Tamil Tiger guerrilla attacks.

Police and fire fighters cleared the debris from the bomb site at the busy Maradana intersection and opened the area for traffic Friday morning as two investigating units were set up to probe the blast.

There was no reaction from the LTTE to the bomb attack and the group's latest press release sent to news agencies here Friday made no reference to the bus bombing.

It instead accused the airforce of bombing a Roman Catholic church in the north the country Tuesday.

Jordan, Clinton at centre stage of sex scandal probe

WASHINGTON (R) — Details of President Bill Clinton's sworn story of his relationship with Monica Lewinsky leaked out Thursday as his friend Vernon Jordan testified for a second day before the grand jury investigating the White House sex scandal.

In another development, Ms. Lewinsky's lawyer William Ginsburg showed up at the courthouse where the probe is unfolding to argue his 24-year-old client should be immune from prosecution in return for her cooperation.

Sources familiar with the case said Mr. Ginsburg, independent Counsel Kenneth Starr and associates spent more than five hours before chief U.S. district Judge Norma Holloway Johnson in a closed hearing that could decide if Ms. Lewinsky will undergo grand jury questioning.

It was believed to be the first time Mr. Ginsburg has been to the courthouse and only the third known time that Counsel Starr has been there during the 6-week-old investigation.

Afterwards, Counsel Starr's prosecutors and Mr. Ginsburg declined comment on the outcome. "We have no statement whatsoever regarding the grand jury and what was going on before the judge," Mr. Ginsburg said as he left the courthouse.

Counsel Starr's grand jury is probing allegations that Mr. Clinton had sex with Ms. Lewinsky and enlisted Mr. Jordan, his close friend and trusted adviser, in an effort to get the young woman to join in a cover-up. Mr. Clinton and Mr. Jordan both deny the alle-

gations. When Mr. Jordan finished his testimony, he reiterated publicly that he had never encouraged Ms. Lewinsky to lie, or helped her find a job for silence about her links to Mr. Clinton.

"That's the truth. That's the whole truth. That's nothing but the truth," Mr. Jordan said from the courthouse steps.

While helping Ms. Lewinsky get a lawyer and find a job, he said, "I did not in any way tell her or encourage her to lie. And secondly ... my efforts to find her a job were not a quid-pro-quo for the affidavit that she signed" denying having had sex with Mr. Clinton.

Mr. Jordan, a veteran of the Black Civil Rights movement and now one of the most powerful lawyers in Washington, quoted the Apostle Paul in summarising his testimony.

"I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith, and we will see what time will tell us," he said, adding that he did not know whether he would be called back for more questioning.

Mr. Jordan's testimony was largely eclipsed by a bombshell sideshow development — the Washington Post's front-page publication of the most detailed account yet of Mr. Clinton's Jan. 17 deposition in a lawsuit at the heart of the controversy, the Paula Jones sexual harassment case.

In the deposition, according to the Post, Mr. Clinton flatly denied under oath he had a sexual relationship with Ms. Lewinsky, and said it was his secretary who initiated efforts to help the former White House intern find a job.

Mr. Clinton acknowledged exchanging gifts with the young woman, said she visited his office on perhaps five occasions and also said they might have been alone together, the newspaper said.

Mr. Clinton said Ms. Lewinsky gave him a tie and a book, and he brought her souvenirs from his Massachusetts vacation place, Martha's Vineyard. He did not dispute that he might have also given her a hat pin, a gold brooch and Walt Whitman poetry.

During a picture-taking session at the White House, Mr. Clinton again refused to answer questions about his relationship with Ms. Lewinsky, saying it would be "against the law" to do so because a court order kept him from commenting. "Somebody in this case ought to follow the law," he said.

In fact, Mr. Clinton is not legally barred from talking about what he said in the deposition. Only lawyers involved in the case are covered by a gag order.

In the five-hour deposition, the president also acknowledged he talked with Mr. Jordan about efforts to find a new job for Ms. Lewinsky, but said it was his secretary, Betty Currie, who had initiated the career help, the Post reported.

Mr. Jordan's lawyer Bill Hundley said there was "no question" Ms. Currie acted on Mr. Clinton's behalf. Asked if Mr. Jordan knew from the start about Mr. Clinton's relationship with Ms. Lewinsky, he handily said: "No, but he did ask the \$64,000 question ... the president said no and Jordan

believed him."

Since the account of Mr. Clinton's deposition largely supported previous denials of misconduct, there was immediate speculation the Post article was a strategic leak by the White House or Mr. Clinton's private attorneys, David Kendall and Robert Bennett.

White House spokesman Mike McCurry "specifically and categorically" denied the Mr. Clinton camp was behind it. Mr. Bennett said Mr. Clinton's legal team would ask the courts to punish those responsible.

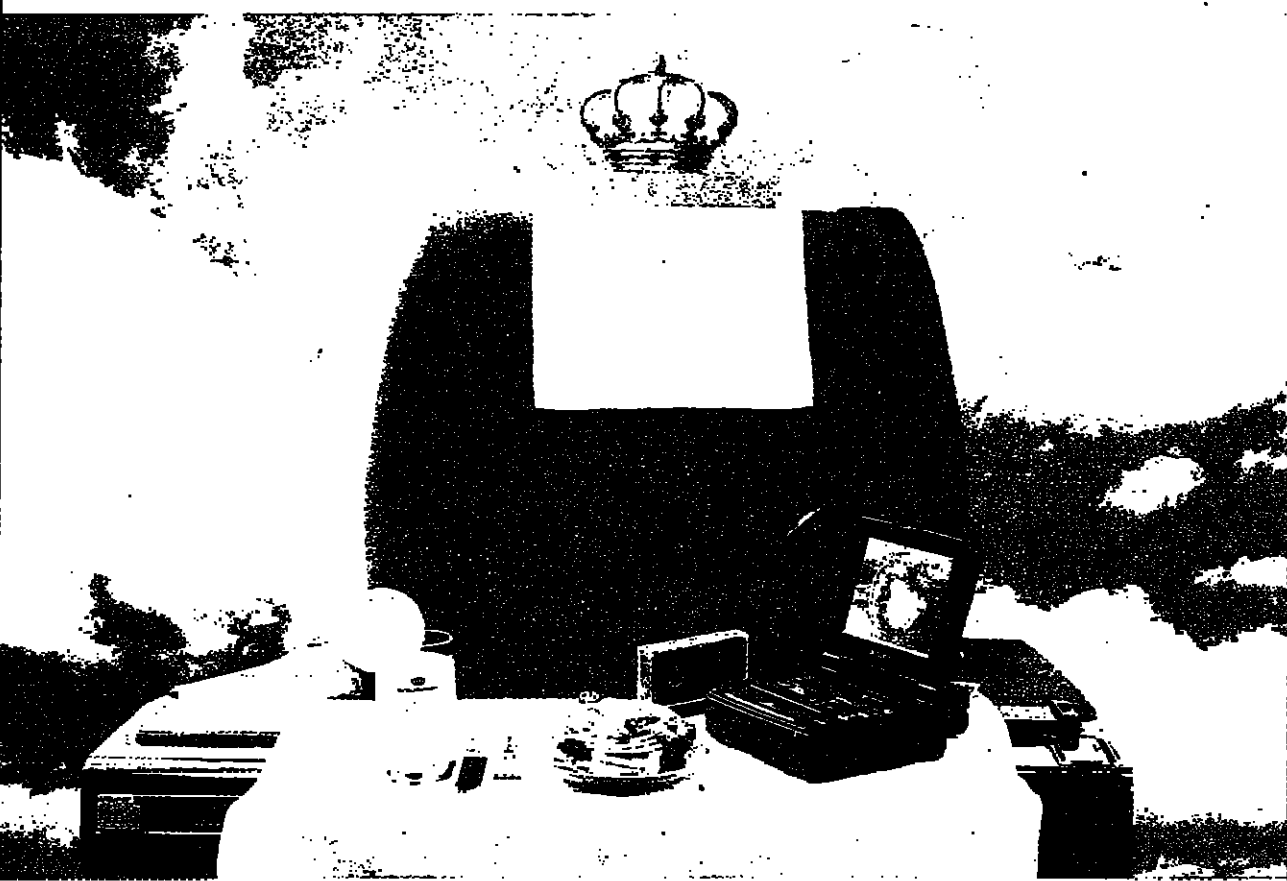
"The releasing of the deposition, the leaking of it, was a reprehensible and unethical act by the antagonists of the president. It showed great disrespect for chief Judge Johnson, who's handling one aspect of this — the grand jury aspect — (and) it showed great disrespect for Judge Susan Webber Wright, who placed this deposition under seal," Mr. Bennett said.

Judge Wright is presiding over the Jones lawsuit, which will go to trial in Little Rock, Arkansas, on May 27. It was digging by lawyers for Mrs. Jones that uncovered the Clinton-Lewinsky link.

Counsel Starr in a statement late in the day denied any involvement in the leak. "We categorically deny that we were either directly or indirectly the source of the story," he said.

In the deposition, taken by Mrs. Jones' attorneys with Mrs. Jones herself present, Mr. Clinton again denied that he asked Mrs. Jones for oral sex in an Arkansas hotel room in 1991, the Post said.

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Right step to combat crime

THE RECENT establishment of a family protection unit at the police department is a milestone in the drive to prevent crime against society's most vulnerable groups: women and children. A brainchild of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the new unit was launched last September with little fanfare, but with considerable appreciation from sociologists, criminologists and human rights activists. The unit is now campaigning to bring attention to its aims and endeavours, especially among those most affected by abuse and exploitation within the family.

It is no secret that violence in the country has increased at a disturbing pace over the past few years. Criminologists attribute this rise in crime, especially within the family, to socio-economic factors like poverty and unemployment. Domestic violence like rape, incest and other sexual or physical abuse of children and women, though, could be attributed to more complex causes to do with modernity that has hit a society still patriarchal in nature and oppressive by extension. The dynamics of modernisation has made our lifestyle more complex. But our legal system has failed to keep pace. But to maintain a balance between the dictates of progress, and the need for civility, compassion and respect for human life is something that is taxing the brains of sociologists and psychologists.

A peculiar feature of domestic violence in our country is the so-called crimes of honour, which take the lives of no less than 30 women every year. Social workers have yet to come up with an effective remedy to this affliction and attribute it in part to outdated societal values and official tolerance. Lenient sentences, and the absence of an official policy or campaign against these crimes are among the principal causes of their continuation. Officials, community leaders and NGOs need to speak out against these crimes in order to influence social mores. As long as the government remains silent, and the courts keep on handing down lenient punishments or enter into plea bargaining with suspects at the expense of the right of the individual, then there can be no solution to the problem.

As we commend the establishment of the new police unit in the capital, we hope that similar centres will be established elsewhere in the country, so that the maximum number of victims can benefit from the service. Easy access to these units is the mainstay of the success of their mission. All Jordanians, wherever they live, must be able to make use of the service. This cannot be so without the proliferation of offices everywhere in the country.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Hussein Abu Rumman called on the Arab countries to capitalise on the positive developments in the Middle East over the past two weeks and to meet at the summit level in order to direct attention towards ending Israel's occupation of Arab territories. The writer said that in the past two weeks the danger of a military strike on Iraq has vanished, Turkey has expressed desire to open a new chapter in relations with Syria and Iraq, and the Lebanese resistance has forced the Israeli government to declare its desire to withdraw from southern Lebanese territory. But in the Palestinian lands, said the writer, the Israeli government has not relented, is going ahead with plans to build settlements and does not want to implement the peace accords with the Palestinians. What the Arabs are required to do, he said, is to involve France, China and Russia in the peace making process on the one hand and launch a worldwide diplomatic offensive in order to force Israel to abide by the international legitimacy and implement U.N. resolutions on the other. The writer said this can best be achieved through an Arab summit meeting which would help remove lingering differences among Arab countries and pool their efforts towards saving the Palestinian people from occupation.

Al Arab Al Yawm's Muwaffaq Mahadin said that like Britain, the U.S. is currently witnessing a decline and a phased shrinking of its empire. The U.S. was forced to refrain from launching aggression on Iraq despite its massing of an armada of warships and war planes because the world stood fast in its face preventing it from committing its crime, he said. America's closest ally, Israel, was forced to accept the idea of withdrawing from Lebanese territory under the pressure of the resistance forces. Libya won the case against the U.S. in the Lockerbie affair at the International Court of Justice, the Arab countries which supported Washington in the 1991 war on Iraq have opposed its new crime on the Arab World, according to the writer. It is true that the U.S. remains the sole superpower, he said, but moves by Russia, China, France and Japan are making it difficult for Washington to manoeuvre at will, and most nations are showing growing anger at U.S. arrogance and its double standard policies.

Jordanian Perspective

By Dr. Musa Keilani

U.S. facing dilemma on direct dealing with Iraq

BRUCE RIEDEL, the U.S. national security advisor, revealed more about U.S. policy objectives than official spokesmen usually care to, or care to admit. Last Wednesday, the United States Information Service, in a professional, clever initiative, was kind enough to host Riedel in Amman for a television interview during which he clearly defined the strategic interests of his country. Though the State Department has not yet announced its stand officially, no doubt, His Majesty King Hussein's effort to initiate a dialogue between the U.S. and Iraq is the centrepiece of the Monarch's upcoming talks with U.S. President Bill Clinton. But there is skepticism in Washington's mood to accept the initiative in the spirit and meaning it is intended. The King and HRH Crown Prince Hassan have been calling for such a dialogue since the very beginning of the Gulf crisis, and Washington strategists, including former President George Bush, were not exactly enthusiastic about the idea if only because discussing the real issues with the Iraqi leadership did not suit American policies and its approach to the Middle East at that time. Destruction of Iraq as a military power in the region was one of the objectives of Washington's policy, or rather, as Riedel put it, "Iraq is a repeat offender that has to be disarmed."

Having largely achieved that purpose, the question that now faces the U.S. is whether the time is opportune for a dialogue with Baghdad.

From what we have heard from our officials, Clinton did not reject the idea out of hand when the King proposed it at the height of the recent crisis over U.N. inspection of Iraq's weapons programme, but what has not been heard in response is much encouragement from the White House press spokesman on Thursday. One can only hope that his statements, which are neither "a red no" or a green yes," are an indication that Washington is keeping an amber open mind to study and evaluate the pros and cons.

Still, what is required is a calculated guess at how American thinking would be in terms of fine-tuning Washington's determination to assume a key role in Iraqi politics. Whether the Arabs and Iraqis like it or not, we can discern a dedicated pattern of U.S. behaviour aimed at determining the future of Iraq. Recent calls from U.S.

senators, as well as the national security advisor, that Washington set the ouster of Saddam Hussein as Iraqi president are clear signal of a part of Washington politicians' thinking. Given those mounting calls, is it possible that Clinton, already facing serious problems with Congress over many issues, might be willing to entertain the idea of dealing with Saddam Hussein with a view to ending the crisis once and for all?

However, the reality remains that the U.S., despite its reported efforts and campaigns, has been unable to topple the regime in Baghdad, and it will remain that way for the foreseeable future unless nature plays its mysterious hand in the affair. That is, of course, assuming the present situation suits U.S. strategies and policies well enough and serves American political and economic interests. Hypothesising there was no Saddam Hussein in Iraq, the United States could not have that "convenient" a stranglehold on all Arab oil fields in the Gulf, nor could U.S. troops stay in the region and scare Tehran into "moderate" Khatami political stands. But can Washington afford to let the situation continue for many years and shoulder the consequences of a troubled Middle East region?

Jordan, being in the middle of the crisis from the day Iraq entered Kuwait in August 1990, has always called for dialogue to replace confrontation. But no one was willing to listen including Saddam Hussein himself, who, in fact, did not have the courtesy to return the King's telephone calls, and it was the people of Jordan who paid a dear price for their principled stands and positions which were very conveniently misinterpreted as representing an endorsement of Iraq's actions.

Jordan's position could not have been made clearer when, upon the defection of Hussein Kamel to Amman in August 1995, the King and Crown Prince exerted an effort by calling on Washington to make it known how it intended to deal with Iraq. If the idea is to remove Saddam Hussein, then why not go about it through open means and get it over with the same manner and fashion Washington dealt with Panama. If the U.S. is not inclined to do that, then it should accept reality and deal with the present regime in Baghdad, as well as move, through diplomatic means, towards a dialogue similar to that which U.S. Lt. Col. Oliver North used to conduct with

Ayatollah Khomeini's men, or a continuation of the same dialogue that Washington had had with Baghdad in the late 80s during the final stages of the Iran-Iraq war.

Obviously, Jordanian calls are not intended as an open challenge to U.S. policies in the Middle East. Therefore, we are surprised to see some circles resorting to hiding behind ambiguous interpretations of U.N. Security Council resolutions which, judging from what we have seen so far, are designed to prolong the crisis rather than restore normalcy to the region.

That Washington has recognised that the best means to resolve the problem is dialogue with the Baghdad regime on the basis of international legitimacy and all related norms and practices that guide relations between the two countries, and Arab public opinion sees military action is not the answer and would lead to increased rejection of Washington's double standard policies. Washington and the world community will benefit from a stable region.

So far, recent developments contributed to rehabilitating Baghdad in Egyptian, Syrian and three Gulf capitals. Moreover, Saddam Hussein was glorified in Arab streets. Nothing could have brought forth the new Saddam Hussein, the way he has always been hoping for, like the British-American threats and bombers.

Dealing with Israel, which refuses Security Council Resolution 425 on Lebanon, and Iraq, which announced total compliance with resolution 1154 should have moved a reluctant Clinton administration to see dialogue as the means to resolve the crisis. What happens next?

Will the White House move to ease congressional opposition to dealing with the Saddam Hussein regime? Can it accept telling the American public that after all it might be a good idea to launch a dialogue with a regime and people which have been cleverly dehumanised and demonised by the U.S. media to the extent that a majority of Americans, at the moment, would not even mind if the U.S. decided to nuke Iraq?

But what is more surprising is that U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright came out to announce on Thursday that Washington has no diplomatic plan to solve the logjam in the area, creating the impression that Arabs understand only the political language of Stealth bombers and Cruise missiles.

U.S. commentators run the gamut on critiques of Annan performance

By George S. Hishmeh

WASHINGTON — The reverberations from the U.N.-brokered deal with Iraq's Saddam Hussein allowing unrestricted U.N. arms inspections continue to come from both sides of the U.S. political spectrum, often offering the Clinton administration more bite than it can chew.

While the Iraqi situation remains in a holding pattern pending the renewal of the U.N. inspections, opinion makers are engaged in a battle royal over how the capable U.N. secretary general, Kofi Annan, managed to pull off such an unprecedented deal — a signed document — with the regime of the feared Iraqi strongman on "free and unfettered" inspections of alleged weapon sites.

Mary McGarry, the uncrowned doyen of Washington columnists, dismissed the criticism by these "know nothings" and wrote, "You might think that the fire breathers on the (Capitol) Hill would overlook Annan's polite words about Saddam Hussein — speaking well of a host is common in all etiquette — considering that Annan was doing for the rest of the world what it could not do for itself."

The trashing — McGarry's word — of Annan by the Republican leadership was echoed by the outlandish advocacy by other conservatives, some of whom were aides of former President George Bush.

Zalmay Khalilzad, who served as undersecretary of defence in the Bush administration and is at present with the Rand Corporation, contributed an article to the respected Wall Street Journal which appeared under the headline, "It's Not Too Late to Topple Saddam."

He said past U.S. efforts to help the divided Iraqi opposition to the tune of roughly \$100 million "while well-intentioned, were flawed." The money was apparently spent mostly on

"public relations and propaganda, and not military aid."

Khalilzad proposed a five-point programme that would encourage the establishment of a broad-based opposition "including Kurds, Shiite Muslims and Sunni Muslims" which would, in time, be encouraged to form a provisional government. Economic and political support as well as military assistance including "training, intelligence and equipment such as antitank weapons" must be provided from Iraq frozen assets here. A "Radio Free Iraq" to undermine Saddam's legitimacy is necessary, he said.

The former Bush aide advocated U.S. coordination with its regional allies like Turkey, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia "just as it backed the Afghan people against the Soviet occupation of the 1980s."

He reasoned: "Then, too, many critics argued that the Afghans were too divided and the Soviets too strong for the strategy to work. They were wrong, just as critics of 'rollback' are wrong today."

The publisher of the conservative Weekly Standard and a former State Department official, William Kristol and Robert Kagan respectively, summarised the views of the detractors in the Washington Post:

"It is clearer now than ever that there are only two real choices: ever more Kofi Annan-style concessions leading eventually to the full emancipation of Saddam, or a serious political-military strategy to remove Saddam and his regime. And let's not kid ourselves: In any such political-military strategy, the military element is central. Unless we are willing to live in a world where everyone has to do business with Saddam and his weapons of mass destruction, we need to be willing to use air power and ground troops to get rid of him."

Even the more sober Washington Post said

the merits of the Annan agreement have been "greatly exaggerated" by administration advocates.

In its lead editorial March 2, the paper however underlined the "unattractive options" facing the Clinton administration and suggested the Annan deal only offers some time to develop "a strategy that might leave the United States in a better position if, as seems likely, Saddam Hussein tests the U.N. resolve."

The options enumerated by various experts summarised editorially were:

— A policy seeking Saddam Hussein's removal from power because "even if inspectors could comfortably certify the nation 99 per cent anthrax-free, Iraq could have the wherewithal and technical expertise to rebuild."

— A large scale commitment of U.S. ground troops could guarantee Saddam Hussein's downfall. This option rests on the premise that the Iraqi leader's grip on power is "shakier now than in the past and that his people are ready to turn against him, his armed forces are weak and demoralised."

— Containment is the option of those who feel that "as long as Saddam Hussein knows he would face massive retaliation, he would not use his weapons of mass destruction."

Proponents of this policy advocate better relations with Iran and support of anti-Hussein elements "short of full commitment." Drawbacks to containment are said to include "the danger of ceding the initiative to Saddam Hussein" who can force the United States to maintain a large and expensive military force in the region, and "as he has twice done in the past four months, choose his time and method to provoke a crisis."

There are no easy choices, the Post conceded. But, it concluded, "to marry the rhetoric of removal — by likening Saddam Hussein to

Hitler and warning of the imminent threat he represents — to a policy of containment can only undermine U.S. credibility."

The Los Angeles Times took a similar line proposing building "as broad a coalition as possible in support of future military action, should that be needed." It added: "Iraq escaped the fire this time. Next time could well be different."

In a lengthy retrospective on the stand-off with Iraq, the Washington Post provided readers an amazing eye-opener on the inner workings of the Clinton administration.

The article said that as "the confrontation neared the brink last month, according to many participants, the misgivings of the president and his national security team grew in tandem with the intensity of their threats."

However, it added that Clinton's senior advisers insist that Clinton did not "waiver from his decision" to launch the strikes if the Iraqi leader failed to halt the obstruction of the U.N. inspectors — "and add that he remains committed to do so if the crisis resumes."

Several advisers explained, according to the Post, that Clinton's "foreboding grew as he focused on the costs and the risks of a bombing campaign." Hence, his embrace of the Kofi Annan mission to Baghdad.

The article concluded: "And what strikes many of the president's advisers is that the next round with Saddam Hussein will begin exactly where the last one left off: another probe, another threat, another struggle to channel domestic and international support for military force. 'God knows what's going to happen,' said a high-ranking administration official. 'That's our position.'"

The writer is a Washington-based freelance journalist. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

Routes to take in Iraq crisis aftermath take on various shades

Reviewed by Elia Nasrallah

THE LOCAL dailies last week commented on His Majesty King Hussein's moves to end the U.S.-Iraqi confrontation, the situation in the region following the U.N.-Iraqi accord, the Israeli government's policies and Jordanian domestic affairs.

Al Arab Al Yawm's Taher Adwan described King Hussein's efforts to bring about direct Iraqi-U.S. dialogue as the most appropriate approach towards defusing the tension in the Arab region on a permanent basis.

The U.N. secretary general is to be commended for defusing the tension through his efforts that resulted in the conclusion of the accord on arms inspection, but the King's efforts are designed to find a lasting settlement, said the writer. Furthermore the Turkish initiative to bring about peace between Iraq on the one hand and the neighbouring Arab states on the other complements the King's drive towards a lasting peace, noted the writer. He said it is hoped that the Arab League will take its own initiative and start moves towards ending the sanctions on the Iraqi people and close the Gulf crisis for good.

Al Ra'i daily said the King's visits to Oman and the United Arab Emirates marked the beginning of his drive to reconcile Iraq with the rest of the Arab countries and return it to the Arab fold. The King's initiative to

bring about a dialogue between Iraq and the U.S. aims at achieving a lasting peace in the Gulf, the paper said. The King's current efforts assume significance coming in the aftermath of the U.N.-Iraq accord that defused tension and moved away the spectre of war and devastation from the region, said the paper. Turkey's support of the King's efforts and Ankara's plans to reconcile the countries of the region should win support from all Arab countries if they wish to see their region enjoying a lasting peace, the paper said.

Raja Al Issa of Al Ra'i discussed the Arab countries' shipments of food and medicine to the Iraqi people, saying the growing number of air shipments and the flight of Arab countries' aircraft to Baghdad in the past week indicate the Arab states determination to see the sanctions lifted and offer seriously needed assistance to the Iraqi people, said the writer. This "air bridge," said the writer, shows that the U.N. Sanctions Committee has finally realised that the Iraqi people are suffering and also means that the Arab states have started to realise that the U.S. is the aggressor bent on killing the Arab people and imposing hegemony on their territories. What is needed, said the writer, is a concerted effort by Arab leaders to press the U.N. into lifting the sanctions. Such an endeavour, if actualised, he said, will translate into significant support for King

Hussein's initiative to end the danger of war posed to the Gulf region.

THE WEEK IN PRINT

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek addressed what he described as Britain's hostile attitude towards the Arab countries. He accused London of being behind the American escalation of tension in the Arab region and the American threats to Baghdad. Britain has a long history of conspiracy against the Arabs since the Great Arab Revolt of 1916 when it defaulted on its promises to the Arabs and offered the Jews a national homeland in Palestine, giving them land that belongs to the Arab Nation. Dr. Fanek said. He said, in 1990 Britain, under a conservative government, encouraged the American administration to launch war on Iraq, and in 1998 the Labour government of Britain openly incited U.S. President Bill Clinton to use force against Iraq. In fact Britain has been leading an international conspiracy not only against the Arabs but also against the peace loving nations. He added that Britain continues to act against the interests of the developing nations and continues to draw the hostility and hatred of their people.

Salah Jarrar, also of Al Ra'i, warned that another round of U.S.-

led Western war on the Arabs and Muslims is imminent. He called on the Arabs to be ready, adding that U.S. forces are still threatening Iraq. Jarrar said the Western world, in particular the U.S., does not want to see the Arabs rising against oppression or undertaking measures to strengthen their intrinsic power to confront Israel. The U.S. is in the Middle East to rain bombs on Iraq and to test its weapons on the Arabs and at the same time its forces are besieging not only Iraq but all the Gulf states, according to the writer. He said the Western countries waste no time searching for an excuse to attack Iraq and keep the Arabs weak and in disarray, and they are definitely preparing for an imminent military strike. The writer said the Arabs ought to take the initiative to solve the Iraqi issue, and the Arab League has a duty to reconcile Baghdad with the rest of the Arab capitals in order to thwart U.S. conspiracies.

Another Al Ra'i writer, Mahmoud Rimawi, said the Israeli government, which continues to occupy Syrian, Palestinian and Lebanese territories, is trying to deceive the world of its false intention of ending its presence in Lebanon. Israel is attaching conditions to its withdrawal from southern Lebanon, but U.N. Security Council Resolution 425 does not provide for any terms except Israel's unconditional pull-out, said the writer. The present Israeli government's diplo-

matic offensive in Europe, Rimawi said, is designed to deceive the world community into believing that the Jewish state is inclined towards peace with its Arab neighbours and wants to withdraw its forces from Lebanon. But, he said, Israel aims to hold on to the Syrian Golan Heights and the Palestinian territories in defiance of the U.N. and its resolutions. Syria and Lebanon should not merely reject the Israeli offer but they ought to demand that Israel unconditionally withdraw its forces from all occupied Arab lands.

According to Sultan Hattab of Al Ra'i, the Arabs should not leave the Palestinians alone to face Israel's oppressive measures and should not satisfy themselves by saying that the Palestine Liberation Organisation is the sole authority that should handle the destiny of the Palestinian people. The Arab leaders realise that the Palestinian leadership is weak and cannot withstand the Israeli military and political hegemony and therefore is not in a position to achieve the aspired Palestinian national objectives, Hattab said. The writer said the Arab leaders should not suffice themselves by giving the Palestinians lip service and thus providing support in word rather than deed but should work together to bring about worldwide pressure on Israel to force it to end its occupation of Palestinian territories.

كنا من الامل

Syria — a planned economy?

The Political Economy of Syria under Assad
By Volker Perthes
London-New York: LB. Tauris, 1997, 298 pages

ANYONE visiting Syria in the mid-80s was surely struck by the drastically rising prices, frequent and long-lasting electricity cuts, and shortages of the most basic goods. The Political Economy of Syria examines the policies that lay behind this crisis, as well as the measures that have led to its alleviation. This book is outstanding because the author steers clear of the two extremes which one often encounters in studies of Syria. Perthes does not uncritically echo official claims or data; nor does he simply decry Ba'athist policy without regard for the conditions that have framed it. Instead, we find careful evaluation of existing data and academic research from a variety of sources, reinforced by interviews with Syrian state and party officials, businessmen, industrialists, unionists and others, during his extended stay in the

country.

One of Perthes' major theses is that Syria's economic transformation has been largely a result of independent political decision-making on the part of the leadership. However, he demolishes the myth that Syria is a country closed to the outside world (though the initial period of Ba'athist rule was heading in that direction). "From the time of Assad's takeover generally and after 1973 in particular, Syria's economic policies moved towards... economic opening, that is, to international markets, to the conservative Arab states and... to the domestic private sector" (p. 42). This infitah was modified in 1977 due to economic constraints, mainly deterioration in the balance of payments, only to be renewed in 1983, when the state found itself with greatly reduced resources at its disposal. This led to a gradual, but definitive, opening up to the private sector. As a result, by the 90s, "one can no longer speak in practical terms of a planned economy in Syria" (p. 61).

In contrast to many other countries, "Syria has never, to date, allowed bilateral donors or international financial institutions to interfere in any substantial way with its economic policies, nor negotiated aid for economic reform programmes" (p. 203). The irony is that, for all its fierce independence, much of Syria's economic and military development has been externally financed — whether by Arab oil states, Iran or the Soviet Union — for geopolitical reasons. Even so, Syria charted its own course. Perthes notes, for example, that the current economic reform process cannot be traced to changes in Moscow, since the second infitah began before Gorbachev assumed power in 1985.

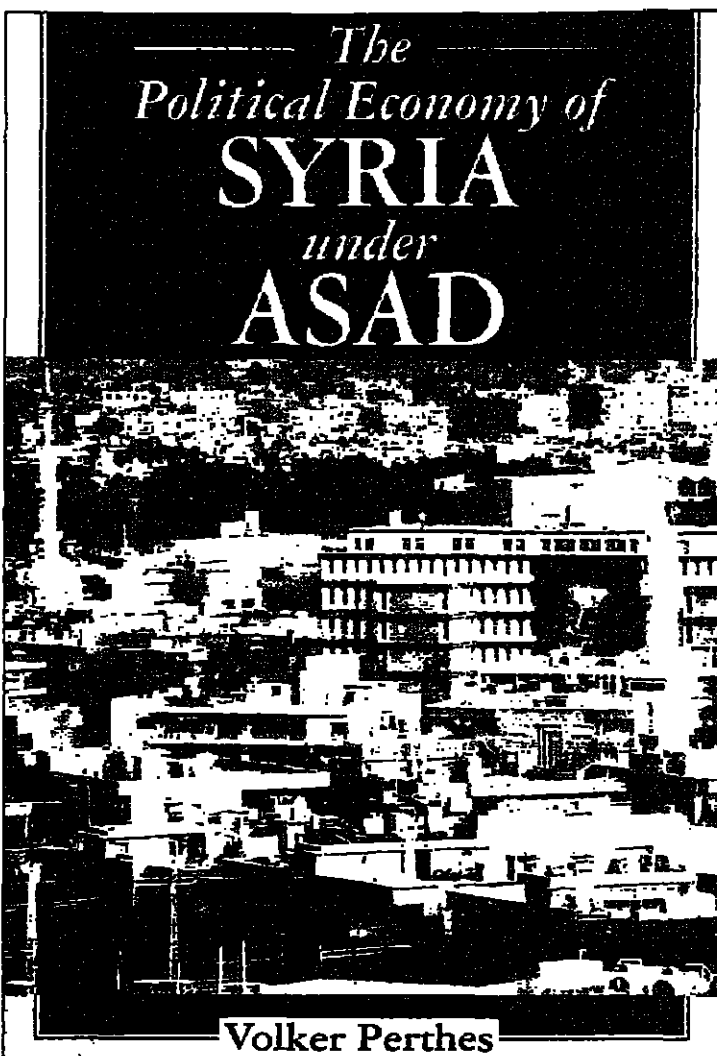
The other irony of Syria's independence is that, although it never acceded to IMF or World Bank demands, the measures the government itself enacted to resolve the economic crisis have been quite similar to those normally prescribed by these institutions. However, even in the economic field, the

Homegrown economic restructuring is not without social consequences, as Perthes is quick to point out. Many sectors of the economy have been reinvigorated and new ones have emerged, especially after the 1991 investment law. Accordingly, certain strata from both the old and the new (state-connected) bourgeoisie are prospering. However, poverty and social inequality are also on the rise due to insufficient job opportunities, lack of a meaningful public social security system, the reduced real income of state employees, and "the growing divide between a small upper stratum and a vast petty-bourgeois basis in the private sector." According to Perthes, "The big challenge for the period to come will be finding employment for the growing and, in the Syrian case, extremely young population — a task often neglected by the stabilisation and adjustment programmes in many Third World countries" (p. 63-4).

regime has consistently given priority to certain political goals. International funds may have been forfeited, but stability and loyalty were secured. "By maintaining control over economic adjustment, and introducing reform measures selectively, Syria's leadership has been able to maintain its patronage basis in the bureaucracy and public sector and extend it, rather than lose it, in the private sector. Furthermore, by not allowing external actors any influence over its economic policies, the regime has been able to bolster its national credentials" (p. 251).

Sally Bland

BOOK REVIEW



Novelist Joseph Heller relishes the past in memoir

By Andrew Stern
Reuters

CHICAGO — Approaching his 75th birthday, author Joseph Heller speaks and writes nostalgically about a childhood spent cowering on New York's Coney Island and a career that may have peaked in the 1960s with his signature novel, "Catch-22."

Heller, now paunchy and with foamy white hair, spoke glowingly of his 1961 novel about the stressed-out antics of U.S. Air Force bomber crews in Italy during the World War II. The title, which is now in dictionaries as a part of the language, came to define for millions of readers the feeling of being trapped by an indifferent and capricious bureaucracy.

"I won't try to define 'Catch-22,'" Heller told Reuters in his Brooklyn accent. "I believe the book remains relevant in so many ways because it deals not so much with the war situation

but our societal situation (in) which people are at the mercy of other people," he said in an interview.

Still smarting, and quoting from two highbrow reviewers who panned his novel when it came out, Heller seized the chance to gloat over its ultimate success and the celebrity and publishing status it afforded him for six subsequent books.

"I get recognised, sometimes people come over. You can work 15 years and write two or three novels and not get recognition. I prefer it the way I've enjoyed it," he said.

Heller was in Chicago recently on the first stop of an international tour on behalf of his just-published memoir, "Now and Then: From Coney Island to Here" (Knopf). In it, he touches on feelings about his early life playing follow-the-leader and more serious games on the streets, beaches and boardwalk of depression-era Coney Island.

Ambivalence about revealing feelings

He skirts through an adulthood that culminates late in the book on a Manhattan psychiatrist's couch, the point where the memoir becomes truly revealing. But both the man and his memoir seem to embody an ambivalence about whether to be forthcoming about his foibles. Heller frequently describes his faults and feelings parenthetically, avoiding elaboration, then confides that he should not have informed the reader at all.

In one instance, he recalls wearing his sister's hair net for fun and foolishly clouding his vision by using olive oil to lubricate his dry eyes. He writes that he did not tell his analyst about these infantile phases and that they ought not to be known publicly — but by then, it's too late.

Self-deprecating and self-congratulatory by turns, Heller showed his dogged-

ness at becoming a writer by recounting how he got dozens of rejection slips for his early short stories.

Readers learn little about his writing process — he painstakingly aims for two pages per two-hour working day. But any titbit is illuminating. "I won't get any idea until I'm bored, then usually it's a single sentence," he said of the nuggets that become novels.

Gor "Catch-22," the sentence that set the tone for the book popped into his head during a fitful night. "The first time Yossarian saw the chaplain he fell madly in love with him."

"Except I didn't have the name of Yossarian," he added.

It might have been catch-18.

Heller also retold the tale of how the book's original title, Catch-18, was fortuitously changed by his editor to avoid confusion with the Leon Uris

novel "Mila 18."

Reminded that he refers to writing novels in the memoir as a "harrowing" occupation, Heller let loose his staccato laugh and explained why: "because it's hard work, and the results are unpredictable. That's one of the reasons I took it out instead of taking to screen writing or television writing, which would not be as demanding."

"I can't stay away from it because I've nothing else to do," he said of his writing. "I could go into a state of depression without anything to do." Asked to elaborate, Heller quickly added, "I don't mean clinical depression. I'd be unhappy, moody, lonely."

Sometimes the friends he meets at a deli to nosh and chew over ideas near his East Hampton, Long Island, home give him ideas for his brand of satire.

Movie maker and fellow Brooklynite Mel Brooks once told Heller the story of an upsetting exchange with his wife, Ann Bancroft. "His wife said to him, 'when you die, where do you want me to put you?' and he blew up and said, 'In the kitchen under the table,' then he began shouting, 'What makes you think I'm going to die before you?' Makes you think, where do you put a dead body?" Heller put the anecdote in one of his books.

Heller divorced his wife of 35 years, with whom he had a son and daughter, and in 1987 married a nurse who helped him recover from a rare, paralyzing nerve disorder, Guillain-Barre syndrome, that struck in 1981. In the book, he writes of being surprised that his current wife still cares for him.

Heller gets a bit melancholy and curmudgeonly about the overall state of affairs. He sees an America rife with insecurity when compared to the ripe opportunities and camaraderie that blessed his generation.

"Throughout the country, it seems to me, there is a plight of dissatisfaction among children, among college students and among adults. There's no sense of security in the future, which we had," he said.

But he later betrays little sympathy for complainers. "Nowadays people are too self-conscious about themselves and people have an expectation of blissful happiness. Anything that interrupts it is a travesty — it's not a travesty, it's a perversion of some kind," he said.

The anxieties created by the war that he fought in as a bombardier, where one in ten army air corps officers died, paled against the upset he met with upon his return.

Heller insists he was not the model for Yossarian, whose terrifying wartime experiences led him to a crazy yearning for home that was stymied by an unpredictably shifty military. "I didn't have any sense of being a person trapped in anything. I finished my missions and I was going home," he said.

Banking on women entrepreneurs

AMMAN — When an economics professor in Bangladesh loaned 65 cents to 42 poor people more than twenty years ago, no one would have believed that this experiment would evolve into what is today the largest microcredit bank in the world, the Grameen Bank, with a loan portfolio of over \$1 billion. Since then, microcredit, or small loans that target the poor, has gained momentum throughout the developing world, becoming one of the hottest ideas for tackling poverty and unemployment.

If anything, the success of microcredit programmes has proven that the poor are capable of repaying their loans, with interest, from profits generated by their activities. More importantly, it has confirmed that women entrepreneurs can lift their families out of poverty and dramatically improve their lives through such modest loans. "By nature, women are the most efficient managers of scarce resources," Mohammed Yunus, the economics professor who founded Grameen Bank, told an audience at the United Nations last year.

In Jordan, where an estimated 22 per cent of the population live in poverty, sustainable microcredit programmes have been increasingly viewed by international donors as an effective catalyst for economic growth by increasing income and creating employment at the grassroots level. And with women comprising less than 14 per cent of the workforce, the importance of microcredit in encouraging poor women entrepreneurs to become active in economic life has become even greater.

"Female-targeted microcredit and enter-

prise today comprise the most effective medium for increasing women's contribution to the national economic development," said Dr. Abla Amawi who heads the poverty and gender programme team at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Jordan.

If anything, the success of microcredit programmes has proven that the poor are capable of repaying their loans, with interest, from profits generated by their activities

According to UNDP, women represent one of the most vulnerable groups in society because they tend to be limited by lack of literacy, business skills and capital. In Jordan, cultural traditions have prevented women, especially those who are married or come from rural backgrounds, to enter the workforce. But now a sluggish economy has added pressure on women to embrace multiple roles in the household and in the economy.

Last year, UNDP, along with three of Jordan's most active donors — United States Agency for International Development (USAID), World Bank and the European Union — sponsored the Jordan Microfinance Conference to upgrade the microfinance sector

here and address the obstacles hindering its development.

Now, in cooperation with USAID and the World Bank, UNDP is preparing to offer training and technical assistance for NGOs and banks on "best practice" techniques.

The \$650,000 initiative will draw on lessons learned by microfinance practitioners around the world.

"This project aims to support microfinance institutions in developing a sustainable practice so that they are able to provide the poor and economically vulnerable groups, women especially, with much-needed access to microcredit," explained Dr. Amawi.

UNDP has also revived an old project idea from Queen Alia Fund (QAF) for a small-scale microfinance project totalling \$103,000. QAF operates approximately 50 community development centres in rural and remote areas, targeting women and children. By capitalising on QAF's well-established network across the country, UNDP is seeking to strengthen its capacity to administer microcredit to poor women on a continuous basis and provide a capital fund for microfinancing.

Today, commercial banks continue to shy away from giving loans to the poor, making microcredit, the most viable tool for mobilising poor women to help themselves and improve their family's quality of life. And with a repayment rate as high as 98 per cent, microcredit programmes have proven that banking on women entrepreneurs makes good business sense.

— United Nations Development Programme

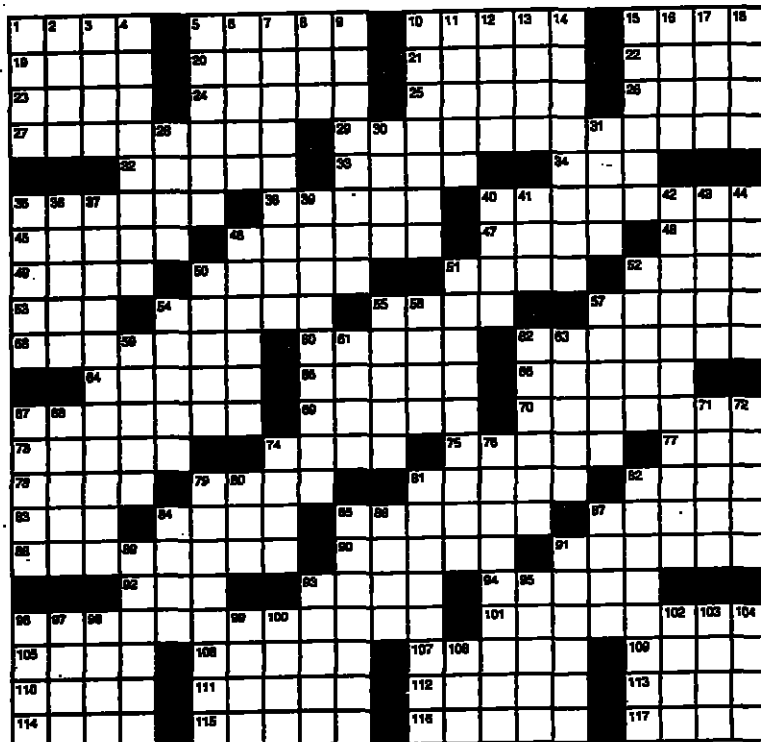
The Saturday Crossword

THREE IN A ROW

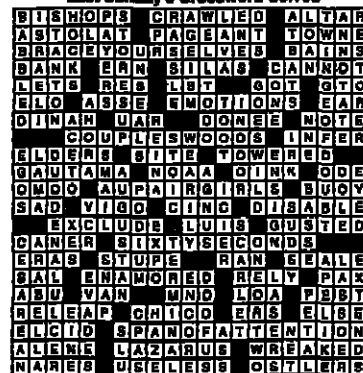
By Frances Burton, Summerville, Georgia

- ACROSS
- 1 Rousing stop
 - 5 Urbane
 - 10 No frills
 - 15 Creates an instant
 - 19 Flipped
 - 20 One analysis
 - 21 City on the Atlantic
 - 22 Inland sea of Asia
 - 23 Actor Guinness
 - 24 Extra-strong cotton thread
 - 25 Stenographer
 - 26 Notoriety
 - 27 ... and sinker
 - 29 ... and delivered
 - 32 Strong favours
 - 33 Empty space
 - 34 At any time, in
 - 35 Country
 - 36 List of candidates
 - 40 Down-to-earth
 - 41 Suffered someone
 - 42 Thingsmail
 - 43 Feed-bag morsels
 - 46 Bottom-line figure
 - 48 Linger
 - 50 Creates a totem
 - 51 Fills the space
 - 52 Sound of a sarcastic laugh
 - 53 Guillermo's cousin
 - 54 Move upward
 - 55 Flery gem
 - 57 Mature
 - 58 African like that
 - 60 Curvy letters
 - 61 Capital of Vietnam
 - 62 Punished with an arbitrary fine

- 64 Remove soap
- 65 In plain view
- 66 Errand boy
- 67 Sid lodges
- 68 Last trying
- 70 Middle of the road
- 73 Grade-B western
- 74 Sonchalm play
- 75 "Sweetness"
- 76 Fence-clearing shot
- 77 Motor vehicle
- 78 Sound mental faculties
- 79 Clairvoyant
- 81 Portuguese ladies
- 82 Thin coating
- 83 Dining area
- 84 Reasons
- 85 Embankment
- 86 Prison rooms
- 87 Keeps on reverberating
- 89 Board
- 91 Most unrefined
- 92 Peggy or Spite
- 93 Earth
- 94 Picture in the mind
- 96 ... and tomato
- 101 ... and serial number
- 105 Disagreeable
- 106 Localities
- 107 States with confidence
- 109 ... and
- 110 Pot starter
- 111 Beg
- 112 Border
- 113 Desperately
- 114 Back talk
- 115 Curvy letters
- 116 Go-ahead
- 117 English boys' school



Last Sunday's Crossword Solved



- DOWN
- 1 Bryce Canyon's state
 - 2 Italian traveler to China
 - 3 Sandwich cookie
 - 4 Crevasse
 - 5 Salt spring
 - 6 Calling into play
 - 7 Tax evaluators
 - 8 Actor Kimer
 - 9 Vicer
 - 10 Misaligned
 - 11 Male amends
 - 12 Location
 - 13 Chilled
 - 14 Vehicle perches
 - 15 Overland expedition
 - 16 By mouth
 - 17 Title for a tonight's lady
 - 18 Luge
 - 28 Alan or Diane
 - 30 Small amount
 - 31 Cave-dwelling fish
 - 35 Capital of Morocco
 - 36 Beige shades
 - 37 ... and roll
 - 39 ... and obey
 - 40 Vice
 - 41 Swallow
 - 42 ... and poo

- 43 Sound of snickering
- 44 Endure
- 45 Speakers' platform
- 46 View top
- 47 ... and charity
- 48 Employer
- 49 Ed who played
- 50 Lou Grant
- 51 Upright
- 52 Harbor
- 53 Atrium
- 54 Pieces of morsels
- 55 Ardent
- 56 Old World lizard
- 57 Changes one's address
- 58 Gringe in fear
- 59 Sino-pine
- 60 Selasia
- 61 Dovers and Parrot
- 62 German dachshund painter
- 63 Thomas Hardy novel ... of the 'Underworld'
- 64 Jokes like Rodney Dangerfield's
- 65 Wingo's subject
- 66 Ogle
- 67 Author of 'The Ginger Man'

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Biltagi pushes for holding 'shopping month' in July

By Issam Qadamani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Tourism and Antiquities Minister Aqel Biltagi said Friday that relentless efforts are currently underway to launch a "shopping month" in the Kingdom next July, but Trade, Industry and Supply Minister Hani Mulki indicated that some obstacles face holding such an event.

In a memorandum to the Ministry of Industry and Trade as well as the chambers of trade and industry, Mr. Biltagi said: "There is a dire need for hosting such an event since it coincides with the Jerash Cultural Festival. Our success depends on the cooperation and coordination among all concerned parties."

He added: "This also requires lowering customs on certain commodities, reducing travel prices and decreasing prices of goods, touristic services and at restaurants...."

Mr. Biltagi said that the mechanism of holding such an event has not yet been crystallised and a committee grouping ministers and businessmen from the private sector will be formed soon to discuss the details of holding the event.

Meanwhile, Dr. Mulki showed enthusiasm towards holding such an event, saying that organising the "shopping month" will face many obstacles, especially those related to decreasing customs tariffs and fees.

He added that any deci-

sion regarding the decrease of customs on certain goods requires a thorough analysis from the government side and decision makers as such a matter affects the treasury's revenues.

Dr. Mulki said the shopping month could be successful if it is organised in the free zone areas or if it is held in the areas where no duties are levied.

Haidar Murad, president of the Jordanian Federation of Chambers of Commerce, voiced support for hosting such an event, saying that one month will not affect the government's treasury.

The private sector considers this month as successful only through converting the whole Kingdom into a free zone area, Mr. Murad concluded.

World Bank says reforms can lift Egypt growth

CAIRO (R) — A World Bank official said on Tuesday Egypt could achieve seven per cent growth if it maintained macroeconomic stability and enhanced exports.

Kemal Dervis, the bank's vice president for the Middle East and North Africa, said Egypt had already made progress in its economic reforms but could benefit from the "long period of confidence" that comes from higher sustained growth.

"I think Egypt has established a great deal of stability and that stability has to continue and people have to really believe that it is irreversible," he told Reuters.

"Growth has not been rapid enough in the past. A lot of people remain unemployed and a lot of people remain excluded from the benefits of growth," he said.

"One area where Egypt really does need to make a

major effort is in the area of industrial and non-traditional exports," Mr. Dervis said. Given Egypt's size, industrial exports of \$2 billion "should have been a lot more," he said.

More effort was needed to develop export infrastructure, especially ports, where facilities needed to be upgraded and procedures streamlined. Mr. Dervis called for a new generation of investment projects aimed at world markets.

He said the World Bank planned to emphasise its support of the agriculture sector and its specialised bank, Egypt's Agricultural Development Bank, with an eye to supporting small-scale agro-industry.

Egypt kicked off reforms in earnest in January 1996 with a drive for privatisation, deregulation and foreign investment.

Gross Domestic Product grew 5.3 per cent in fiscal

1996/97 (July-June), up from 5.0 per cent the previous year and 4.7 per cent in 1994/95.

Mr. Dervis said Egypt needed to raise its domestic savings rate, reform and develop its education sector, expand the reach of the banking sector and maintain macroeconomic stability.

"If all these factors come together, I really am quite confident the Egyptian economy can grow at seven per cent a year. It will make a difference over a decade," Mr. Dervis said.

"We actually project that this can be achieved if current efforts remain on track and if these areas I emphasised are really worked on, I would say by the year 2000 it could grow at seven per cent," he said.

"If you move from five to seven per cent and sustain it over a decade the face of Egypt will really be transformed."

Teething problems beset Palestinian bourse

NABLUS (R) — The Palestine Securities Exchange (PSE) was born amid much excitement a year ago. But some analysts are wondering whether the birth was premature and if the bourse's teething problems would earn it its second year the epithet the "terrible twos."

The bourse's establishment was very controversial. Some said it came into being before its time because there was no political or economic stability in Palestine and that it was set up without guarantees for expansion, said private business consultant Samir Heleila.

Bourse officials and brokers say stalled peace efforts are stunting the exchange's development by discouraging investors and putting the lid on growth in Palestinian self-rule areas.

"I was with those who supported taking the risk of establishing a bourse in the belief that the exchange could finance future economic development," Heleila said.

"But the economic environment has regressed continuously since (Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak) Rabin's assassination and the coming to power of the Likud government," he added.

Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud-led government took power in Israel in May 1996 in elections brought about by the Rabin's murder by a right-wing Jew.

Palestinians blame Netanyahu for dragging peace talks to a near halt. Politics pops bourse's apparent boom on the surface, bourse development over the past 12 months looks encouraging.

The number of companies traded on the exchange, which has a market capitalisation of \$659 million, has risen from 12 to 19.

But only about seven trade actively during the PSE's two weekly sessions Sunday and Wednesday.

What little trading occurs is dominated by the Palestine Telecommunications Company (PALTEL), which usually generates more turnover than all the stocks put together.

PSE General Manager Safwan Bataineh said the exchange had approved the listing of another eight companies which are expected to begin trading soon.

The PSE's Al-Quds index has risen steadily since September 24, while monthly trading values on the exchange have topped \$2 million since November.

But Bataineh is not too optimistic.

"A bourse is a symbol of sovereignty in any country...it is a source of pride for the Palestinian street. But from the start of trading we have faced one difficulty after another."

"Now we've stopped hoping. We're accustomed to keeping our ambitions modest because many of our plans didn't see the light. We established what can be called one of the most modern markets in the world technically speaking but we work under very difficult circumstances that are not to be envied."

Computers circumvent closures operating via a fully automated system that allows remote trading and same day settlement, the bourse began life technically head and shoulders above many regional equivalents.

One of its aims — attracting long-term investment capital from Palestinians living abroad — seems to have come to light.

"We have Palestinian clients in America, the Gulf, Jordan, Egypt and even in 'occupied Palestine,' in Nazareth and Haifa," said Jamal Aladdin, general manager of the Jordan and Palestine Financial Investment Company.

"We started with five investors in June 1997 but now we have 400 active investors. This is proof they have started to trust the bourse," he added.

But the ever-present ghost of Middle East peace talks has loomed gloomily over any reasons to be cheerful.

"Israeli-Palestinian peace talks collapsed last March when Israel broke ground on a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem. Palestinian suicide bombings which killed scores of Israelis worsened the crisis."

Israel responded by closing off its borders with the West Bank and Gaza Strip for several weeks, making it impossible for most Palestinians to travel between the two areas and to reach Israel for work.

The exchange's remote trading system means buy and sell deals are executed via computer, leaving the

Nablus trading room deceptively quiet and free of frantically signalling brokers.

This helped the bourse's work to escape relatively unscathed from the closures. Not so investor confidence, brokers say.

"The closure had a bigger effect on the public than on us. The closures put a damper on people's hopes because the economy wasn't moving. People and goods couldn't move between towns and this affected stocks," Aladdin said.

"Some people were scared and wanted money in hand. People just wanted to sell to get liquidity, not because they didn't trust the companies, but because of the closure. Small investors wanted to sell because of the cheap prices and some were willing to sell at even cheaper prices," he added.

Legislative vacuum and poor economic growth, the snail-like pace of peace-making has also taken its toll on overall Palestinian economic development.

Planning Minister Nabil Shaath said in January the Palestinian economy would depend totally on foreign aid until the year 2000.

He told the Palestinian Legislative Council, while presenting a draft three-year development plan, that average gross national product between 1992 and 1996 fell 18.4 per cent and average per capita income by 36.2 per cent.

"It is difficult to be optimistic about the short term future of the bourse if I am not optimistic about economic development," Heleila said.

He said the Palestinian Authority could do more to encourage the bourse by blowing the dust off outdated legislation.

"The Palestinian Authority has to issue new laws. The corporate law is from the 1950s and needs to be revised. The investment law is from 1994. There is still no bourse law," Heleila said.

Bataineh said the exchange was functioning within a "legislative vacuum" because the world bank's private investment arm, the International Finance Corporation, had twice turned down a law drafted by the Palestinian finance ministry on bourse regulation. He said he did not know why the draft was rejected.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Something you want for your home might be right in your own garage, or else your parents' garage. It may be an older item that can be fixed up and turned into something better you can buy. A little bit of work is required, but that's OK. You're good at that sort of thing.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) A question that's been nagging at the back of your mind will finally get resolved. It could lead to another question, though. Just take your time and think things out carefully. There will be pressure on you to make a quick decision, but that wouldn't work very well, so don't go for that option. If all else fails, stall.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Money is coming into your account, possibly from an older person or parent. If it's for tuition, you'd better not use it to run off to Europe. You could find yourself in a world of hurt. Maybe you can come up with a way to do both. With permission, of course.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) It looks like an older person won't do what you want. He or she insists on being in control. Don't bring up something you know this person will get upset about, if you can possibly help it. Milk and cookies will be more effective than just about anything you can say.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) However, you might feel like travelling this weekend, it's not really a very good idea. It's better time to balance your chequebook and pay your bills. There may be a couple of unpleasant surprises in that pile of paperwork. Better clean it out before it gets any worse.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You might not feel much like playing, if everybody else knows the game and you don't. There's no need to worry. You'll learn quickly. It's a friend who's in danger of making a silly mistake this afternoon. If you can see it coming, say something.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) An older woman needs something you can provide. She'd do just about anything for you, so how about returning the favour? She's not going to ask you for a thing, however. If you ask, don't be surprised if she says "Nothing." Don't take "Nothing" for an answer.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Travel by water would be best. If you can't actually be on the water, being next to it also works. If you can't even be next to it, playing tapes of ocean sounds would be a distant third. Actually, even that would be very romantic, with the right person by your side. Make it happen.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Funding should be relatively easy to get, even for an expensive item. If you're stressed about having to make such a big commitment, relax. You don't have to do it until you're ready. Your shopping may take longer than expected. Schedule a fancy dinner date for tomorrow instead.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You and your mate have more than enough items on your lists. In fact, you have too many. Maybe you can solve the problem by taking off in two different directions, then meeting up later tonight. You'll get twice done in half the time.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You could make some extra money, but it won't be easy. It's a chore you don't like and would just as soon delegate to somebody else. If you can talk someone else into doing it for less money than you'd charge, go ahead. Management counts as work too, you know. You're a natural.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Schedule an early date with a person you want to know better. This doesn't have to be a new friend. It could be somebody you already know very well. You don't have to do much talking, either. A concert, at the theatre or in the privacy of your own home, would be perfect.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

New Check-in facility and Fast Track Service in Gulf Air - Amman

GULF AIR telephone and fax check-in facility has now been introduced to Gulf Air - Amman.

First, Business and Frequent Flyer programme members with a confirmed booking for any Gulf Air flight departing Amman can now check in by using a dedicated telephone or fax number.

The numbers are:
Tel. 4451801
Fax 4451802

Also, the Fast Track facility through immigration counters at Queen Alia International Airport is now available for departing First and Business class passengers as well as Gold and Silver Frequent Flyer programme members.

These new facilities are of great benefit to passengers, as it enables them to check-in in a quick and efficient manner, from the comfort of their home, office or hotel room.

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

1 Dam problem

5 One-and-only

9 Alphabetized list of subjects

14 Unemployed

15 Singer

16 Kristerson

17 A Judd

18 Most icy-bitty

19 Abu, UAE

20 Book of knowledge

22 Major online service

23 Black or White

24 Cursor starter?

27 Publishing grp.

30 Day-to-day worker

33 Potts and Lennox

35 Geographical book

38 Does ushering

39 Culture base

40 Duchess of York

42 Buffalo of the Caribbees

43 Markets

45 Book of names

47 Visits

49 Wife of Jacob

50 Aves.

51 O.T. book

52 Long, narrow inlet

54 Hammanskjold of the UN

56 List of books

62 Selling point

65 Coordinated outfits

66 Hawaiian word for a foreigner

67 USC rival

68 Traditional knowledge

69 Book of maps

70 God of thunder

71 Wide-mouthed pitcher

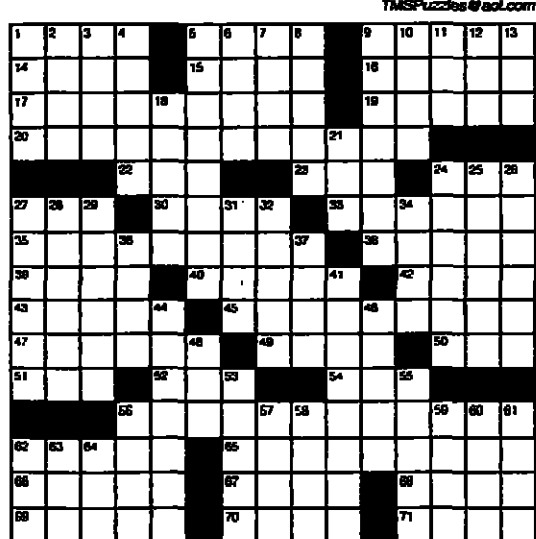
DOWN

1 Less caloric

2 Icy spot

3 Actor

Guinness



By Holden Baker
Greenfield, MA

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PUPPY LOVE POTION
ICES LERAS PASSE
DEW PEEL CENTER
DEE DEE EAR
STAGING ARE ACODE
LOBE ALABAS ADAM
ALLS ALENA SEMI
BIET ENTER TREIT

37 Seldom seen
41 Earphones,
helmets, etc.
44 Elves
46 Tailsman
48 Bro or sis
53 Native Alaskan
55 "The Misfits"
star
56 Lugosi
57 Foot part
58 Norwegian city
59 Farm tool
60 At this place
61 French river
62 Unmannerly cry
63 Fit, follower
64 Our sun

Peanuts



Andy Capp

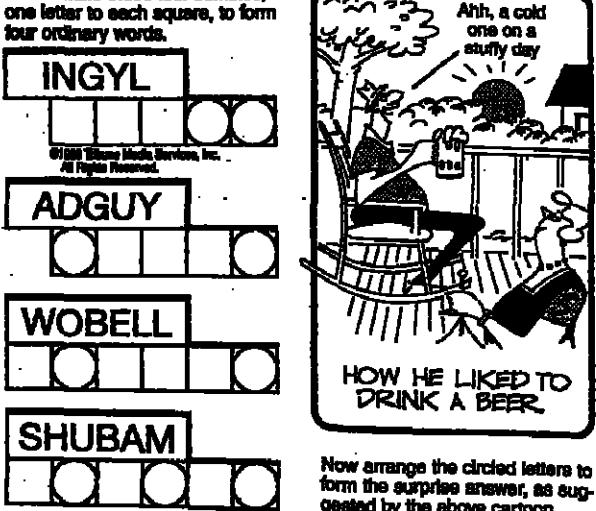


Mutt'n'Jeff



JUMBLE

Unscramble these four jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



Answers:
Yesterday's Jumble: VIPER PUPPY ELIXIR ACCEDE
Answer: What the pizza chef demanded — A PIECE OF THE PIE

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Al Ra'i board to recommend to the general assembly distributing 60% cash dividends and half a share free bonus

**** THE BOARD** of directors of the Jordan Press Foundation, the company that publishes Al Ra'i and the Jordan Times, will be recommending to the general assembly next week raising the company's capital from JD2 million to JD3 million and distributing dividends at the rate of 60 per cent. The increase in capital will be effected by transferring JD1 million out of JD4.5 million of issuance premium to the capital account against distributing half a share free bonus for every share held by the shareholders.

The distribution of 60 per cent cash dividend will be recommended to reflect the rise in after-tax net profit from JD1.07 million in 1996 to JD2.09 in 1997. The company distributed JD1 million, or 50 per cent cash dividend in 1996, and will be distributing JD1.2 million for 1997 if the general assembly approves the 60 per cent dividend rate when it holds its 12th annual meeting on March 18, 1998.

According to the annual report, the company earned a total of JD10.87 million last year, five per cent more than the figure recorded in 1996. Advertising accounted for JD7.25 million or 66 per cent of the earnings while newspaper sales earned the company JD2.70 million or 25 per cent of the total earnings. The remaining amount came from the commercial press (six per cent) and other general income (three per cent).

The company was also able to cut spending by eight per cent as a result of lower prices of paper and expenditure controls adopted by the institutions. The cost of paper and other printing materials accounted for 48 per cent

of the spending followed by salaries and other benefits which accounted for 30 per cent of the total expenditure. Administrative and general expenses took 14 per cent of the total spending with depreciation accounting for the remaining eight per cent. The annual report showed total expenditure at JD8.44 million for 1997.

The company attributed the noticeable improvement in the financial situation last year to higher sales, brought by an increase in the price of the newspaper from Jan. 1, 1997, higher interest on bank deposits and the stable income from advertisement compared to that earned in 1996.

Clarifying some financial points in the annual report, the company indicated that current assets increased by nine per cent to reach JD6.89 million and that working capital increased by 42 per cent to reach JD4.15 million. The liquidity of the company could be better explained when noting that time deposits at banks climbed from JD0.85 million at the end of 1996 to JD1.76 million at the end of last year.

Also indicative of the company's financial strength is that it enjoys over JD1 million credit facilities from local banks (Arab Bank, Cairo Amman Bank, Jordan Gulf Bank, Bank of Jordan and Jordan Kuwait Bank) at interest ranging between 11.5 per cent and 13 per cent.

The company has no debt outstanding to any of the aforementioned banks and even the last current portion of a long-term debt that was due to be settled on March 31, 1998 was repaid on Sept. 27, 1997 (Jordan Times).

Net investments in shares by non-Jordanians fall from JD3.2m to JD0.7m

AMMAN (Petra) — Non-Jordanians last month bought JD4.7 million worth of shares, JD0.7 million more than the same month of last year, Jordan Securities Commission Chairman Michel Marto announced Friday.

Sales by non-Jordanians in February amounted to JD4

million compared to JD 700,000 for the same period in 1997, according to Dr. Marto who noted that the total net investments by non-Jordanians in the Kingdom last month stood at JD700,000 compared to JD3.2 million in February 1997.

General assembly approves distributing 20% dividends Saudi investors bring up capital of Palestinian company to \$100m

AMMAN (J.T.) — The general assembly of the Arab Palestinian Holding Company for Investments has decided to distribute 20 per cent dividends at a meeting held Thursday.

Board of Directors Chairman Omar Aqqad welcomed during the meeting the effective role of Saudi investors who increased the capital of the company to \$100 million, noting that such funding will enhance investments in the Palestinian territories.

Mr. Aqqad pointed out that the company aims to boost investments in the Palestinian lands and revive the Palestinian economy through creating job opportunities.

He said the assembly agreed on merging the Arab Palestinian Holding Company for Investment with Al Aqqad Company for Development in order to expand the activities and the contributions to the Palestinian economy.

He said that the company is currently working on affiliating other companies in the fields of industry, tourism, and services.

The assembly elected Omar Aqqad as chairman of the company and Omar Abbas, Bassam Abu Rudeineh, Abdullah Arafat, Fouad Qattan, Muhammad Mubarak, Hashem Hashem, Fahd Assaf, Nabil Amari, Mohammad Imran, Ghazi Shawa and Tharif Baradie as board members.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHARISANI

TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607175

ORGANIZED MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (28/02/1998 - 04/03/1998)

WEEKLY REPORT

DURING THE LAST 3 WEEKS	COMPANY NAME	P/E	DIV	NO. OF CONTRACTS	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE	AVERAGE MARKET PRICE	TURNOVER	NO. OF TRADING DAYS
326.000	325.000 ARAB BANK	15.9	1.17	70	4820	1654900	336.00	345.00	336.00	343.00	+7.00	343.340	110	5
1.1500	1.1700 JOR. NATURAL BK.	0.00	0.00	78	99909	180829	1.80	1.85	1.76	1.79	-0.01	1.810	238	5
1.5000	1.3500 BANK OF JORDAN	4.3	0.00	27	92005	124321	1.35	1.40	1.33	1.35	-0.01	1.350	295	2
1.0400	1.0200 JOR. EAST INV. BK.	64.4	0.00	8	26900	26226	1.01	1.01	0.96	0.98	-0.03	0.975	269	2
1.7200	1.6800 INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.2	6.14	29	47850	80914	1.68	1.70	1.68	1.70	+0.02	1.691	271	3
5.3000	4.9000 THE HOUSING BK.	29.9	1.94	36	59443	278153	5.30	5.00	4.98	5.00	-0.10	4.999	111	5
1.9500	1.9000 JOR. KHALIL BANK	10.0	0.00	6	268	489	1.90	1.89	1.87	1.87	-0.05	1.872	802	1
1.7400	1.6700 JOR. GULF BANK	4.1	19.14	56	98959	70415	1.67	1.73	1.65	1.69	-0.03	1.712	495	5
2.3000	2.1900 JOR. INV. BK. / JEM	0.0	0.00	3	16667	45001	2.70	2.70	2.70	2.70	-0.00	2.700	333	1
1.0500	1.1900 JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	10.4	4.68	60	25075	52269	2.11	2.11	2.05	2.05	-0.06	2.085	138	5
1.0500	1.0200 UNION BK. SAV. INV.	142.6	0.00	3	24600	27332	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	-0.00	1.020	133	1
2.0700	2.0700 JOR. INV. FID. BANK	13.3	0.00	6	36916	74616	2.07	2.07	2.07	2.07	-0.00	2.070	369	1
1.8000	1.6100 JOR. INV. FID. BANK / JEM	0.0	0.00	6	20923	33702	1.61	1.61	1.61	1.61	-0.00	1.610	419	2
1.8000	1.8000 SEIT. AL-MAL (BEITING)	5	17.86	20	26400	22164	1.81	1.84	1.82	1.84	+0.03	1.840	1320	5

SECTOR	INDEX NUMBER	CHANGE
1.0000	1.0000 ARABIAN SEAS INSUR.	5.6
2.2700	2.2700 JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	6.5
1.2500	1.2500 HOLY LAND INSUR.	6.4
4.5900	4.5900 PHILADELPHIA INSUR.	10.1
1.9000	1.9000 ARAB LIFE INSUR.	8.6

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REUTERS

The Business of Information

Prices as at 6/03/98 19:59

Major Currencies & Cross Rates	Prices as at 6/03/98 19:59
US Dollar	1.8336 0.6117 1.4923 128.25 1.4186 1803.20 2.0676 1.1467
DE Mark	0.5484 0.3337 0.8141 88.85 0.7739 882.83 1.1271 3.3625
GB Sterling	1.8348 2.9870 2.4388 206.72 2.3191 2848.79 3.3647 10.0449
CH Franc	0.6791 122.77 0.4094 85.82 0.3487 1206.80 138.44 4.1198
JP Yen	0.0078 1.4288 0.4785 1.1630 1.1082 14.05 181.04 4.7871
CA Dollar	0.7048 1.2701 0.4281 1.0267 1.11 1280.33 1.4310 4.2894
IT Lira	0.0008 1.0164 0.3389 0.0827 1407.68 0.7862 11.46 3.4054
SE Krona	0.1827 0.2880 0.0884 24.701 20.84 0.2308 33.60 23.6000
FR Franc	0.1827 0.2880 0.0884 24.701 20.84 0.2308 33.60 23.6000

Middle Eastern Currencies									
	USD	JO	SD	QAT	IRN	AEV	SYP	EGP	
US Dollar		0.7090	3.7804	0.3770	3.8408	0.3053	3.6728	1628.50	3.4116
Jordan Dinar	1.4104		8.2897	0.5917	5.1351	0.4306	5.1804	2155.85	4.8117
Saudi Riyal	0.2888			0.1006	0.97	0.0814	0.88	407.56	0.9098
Bahrain Dinar	2.66	1.8806	8.9480		8.66	0.8098	8.74	4054.38	9.0481
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1947	1.0301	1.0301	-	0.0838	1.01	419.83	0.9370
Kuwait Dinar	3.2768	2.9222	12.2843	1.2348	11.93	-	12.03	5008.56	9.9370
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1890	1.0211	1.0128	0.9813	0.0831	-	416.16	0.9288
Lebanese 1000	0.86	0.4659	2.4536	2.2468	2.3819	0.1987	2.4029	-	2.2319
Egyptian	0.2821	0.2078	1.0953	0.1106	1.0672	0.0895	1.0786	448.04	-

First Division Basketball Championship Jazireh, Orthodoxi prepare for showdown

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Ahli-Orthodoxi match which used to be the highlight of the basketball season, gave a clear indication that the competition would be settled between Al Jazireh and Al Orthodoxi despite the playoff system implemented this year.

Al Orthodoxi easily beat Al Ahli 74-49 in match which disappointed the expectations of fans who thought the return of Al Ahli's veterans to the lineup would ultimately bring back their traditional competitive rivalry.

Al Ahli who finished second last year were led by former captain Imad Al Saeed. However, the return of Marwan Matouq and Yusef Zaghoul to the lineup, did not make up for a clear fact: their incoherent lineup has evidently not prepared well.

Al Orthodoxi led 9-0 but Al Ahli, led by Yusef Zaghoul, delighted fans when they caught up and led 13-12.

However, that did not turn the course of events but was rather a short-lived moment of relief.

Clearly better prepared, last year's third placed Al Orthodoxi set the pace and managed to convert the many turnovers of their opponents to win the first half 41-26.

Al Ahli seemed to have improved at the beginning of the second half but they still trailed 46-32 and 56-40.

Al Ahli's centres Ramez Hammoudeh and Marwan Saeedi were totally ineffective under the basket as playmaker Faisal Nsour took on the burden of scoring together with Zaghoul and Mohammad Shamali.

Al Ahli's coach seemed unable to find the right combination while counterpart Murad Barakat, did not have the same trouble as Fadi Saqqa, Naser Bassam and Ayman Du'eis teamed up with veteran Hilal Barakat to keep up their control of the match as they went on to win 74-49.

Another interesting result at the weekend was newcomer Al Jeel's 61-60 win over fourth placed Al Jalil.

The six teams will play two legs following which the top three will play a playoff round to determine the champion. The last placed team will be relegated to the Second Division.

STANDINGS

Team	P	W	L	Sf	Sa	Pts
Jazireh	2	2	-	172	97	4
Orthodoxi	2	2	-	161	91	4
Ahli	2	1	1	132	134	3
Jeel	2	1	1	115	143	3
Jalil	2	-	2	102	148	2
Hussein	2	-	2	103	172	2

Titleholders Al Jazireh are just out of the West Asian Zone basketball qualifiers which they hosted amid preparations to retain the crown they won last year ending a 30-year domination by rivals Orthodoxi and Al Ahli.

The only change on their lineup is the signing of Al Ahli's former veteran Samir Murqus who came out of two-year retirement and returned to the game.

Although not appearing in the same all round excellent form he is known for, Murqus who is sitting out the matches due to injury, is expected to lend the relatively young and upbeat team the match experience of over 20 years as Ahli and national team veteran.

Al Orthodoxi had an undisputed reign from 1976-1989 before Al Ahli won the title in 1990, 1992, 1993 and 1994 aided by the signing of Naser Bushnaq.

Al Orthodoxi came back to win in 1991, 1995 and 1996 and are currently preparing to get back the title.

Iranian football turns down exhibition matches in U.S.

TEHRAN (AFP) — The Iranian football team has turned down an invitation to play exhibition matches in the United States before the World Cup because of a packed schedule, an Iranian official said Thursday.

Mohsen Safai-Farahani, the head of Iran's football federation, said he had received a fax from U.S. sports officials "accepting to pay all the costs" for the visit.

"They offered to hold friendly matches preferably in Los Angeles," where there is large Iranian community, he said.

"But unfortunately we could not accept it because our schedule is full. The distance too is long and we have time constraints," he told a press conference also

attended by the national team's Croat coach, Tomislav Ivic. "We said it is not possible."

Ivic, who took over as coach in January, said he would have liked to accept the invitation but "the program is full and we could not change it." "As far as I am concerned, I would like to go to there with the Iranian team as soon as possible," he said. "There is no problem politically or psychologically. A football team is the best ambassador."

The U.S. and Iranian teams were drawn into the same group along with Germany and Yugoslavia for the World Cup finals in France and they will face each other in Lyon on June 21.

Tehran and Washington broke diplomatic ties in 1980 after Iranian revolu-

tionaries stormed the U.S. embassy here and took its staff hostage. The two countries have been enemies ever since.

But Iran's new moderate President Mohammad Khatami has called for greater cultural and sports contacts, and a first U.S. wrestling team in two decades visited here last month.

However, the Iranian official played down the political significance of the match between Iran and the United States.

"Sport is sport. We have no problem with any countries in the field of sports," he said. "Sport is not a ground for political activities. It is a way to establish friendship between nations."

New tackle law threatens red card blitz for World Cup

PARIS (AFP) — Players attempting a tackle from behind during the 1998 World Cup risk being sent off following the introduction of a tough new law by the International FA Board here on Friday.

Even if the player takes the ball first before bringing down an opponent, the referee has the power now to give a red card.

The key phrase of the new law, an addition to law 12, says: "A tackle from behind which endangers safety of an opponent must be sanctioned as serious foul play."

"And the only solution to that is a red card," said FIFA general secretary Sepp Blatter.

The Board are hoping the new rule will lead to increased goal-scoring chances. "After all football is about scoring goals," said Blatter.

The new law will be brought into force for the World Cup and will apply throughout world football from July 1.

World Cup referees are to meet in France later this month and the new law will be explained to them in detail, along with what action they will be required to take.

Blatter added that the referees' decision would continue to be final, even if television replays showed after the final whistle that a goal should or should not have been allowed.

"The result will not be changed after-

wards. Football will have to live with the mistakes of men. We will always have errors," said Blatter.

Last year FIFA clashed with the German federation when it told them to stop overruling referees who had awarded goals after TV later proved the ball had not crossed the line.

Referees may, however, have help in the future from high technology.

The FA have been asked to carry out a study into the possibility of technology being used to see if a foolproof method exists to prove whether or not a ball has gone over the line.

"Goal-line technology is simply to help the referee," said FA head Graham Kelly. "But he admitted that at present it was not clear if such a system exists."

"It will be very difficult to find a system which can tell if all of the ball is over all of the line," said the Englishman.

The Board also agreed to an FA experiment in Jersey to test a possible change to the free-kick laws.

In the experiment, referees will have the right to move the ball 10 yards closer to the goal if the defending side attempt to slow up the taking of a free-kick.

Cup Winners Cup

Chelsea and Vicenza close in on semifinal Stuttgart, Lokomotiv Moscow hold on to draws

PARIS (AFP) — Away victories put Chelsea and Vicenza closer to a semi-final berth in the European Cup Winners Cup on Thursday.

Two sensational goals in the first twelve minutes from Tore Andre Flo set the groundwork for a magnificent 2-1 victory by English Premiership Chelsea over Real Betis at the Benito Villa Maria Stadium here.

And Vicenza crushed Roda Kerkrade 4-1 in Holland making the return-leg in Italy in two weeks' time almost a formality.

Stuttgart and Lokomotiv Moscow could also be well satisfied. Both forced away from home draws — Stuttgart finishing 1-1 at Slavia Prague and Lokomotiv Moscow soaking up non-stop pressure in Athens and holding on for a 0-0 draw.

Tore Andre Flo, the lanky 6ft 4in Norwegian striker who was included in the Chelsea lineup alongside Gianfranco Zola when new player-boss

Gianluca Vialli dropped himself and fellow-striker Mark Hughes, ripped apart the Betis defence with two exciting runs and hit unstoppable low shots into the net to leave the Spaniards shell-shocked.

Betis, sixth in the Spanish League and chasing their first European honour, were urged on by a fanatical crowd who gave them a ticker-tape welcome. But the home supporters were silenced by the visitors' whirlwind start.

Italian midfielder Roberto Di Matteo slipped Flo a short pass out on the right and just inside the Betis half, and the Scandinavian galloped forward, cut into the box and fired a precise 12-yard angled drive which flew beyond the grasp of Prats.

Betis had hardly got their breath back when Flo struck again for his 11th goal in just 15 starts for Chelsea. This time, Dan Petrescu provided the pass and Flo worked his way almost effortlessly through



Chelsea's Norwegian player Tore Andre Flo scores the first goal for his team as Real Betis' Hristo Vidakovic tries to block during their Cup Winners Cup quarter final first leg in Seville (Reuters photo)

the middle to find the target again. Chelsea's defence was

without England left-back Graeme Le Saux, who failed a fitness test on his damaged ankle, but Steve Clarke had recovered from a stomach bug to join Frank Leboeuf and Mike Duberry at the back.

Vialli also reshuffled things by recalling new Jamaica international Frank Sinclair.

Chelsea's Dutch goalkeeper De Geoy produced several excellent saves — punching out stylish Robert Jarni's swinging free kick from the right midway through the first-half. But as the Spaniards surged forward they left gaps at the back and Chelsea were quick to exploit them.

Midfielder Marquez replaced Yugoslav defender Vidakovic just before half-time and the second-half was only 43 seconds old when he provided a right-wing cross which Alfonso headed home.

The goal brought the Betis crowd to life again but Chelsea held on well to their advantage and will start hot favourites to reach the semi-finals when the two teams replay in London in a fortnight's time.

Vialli pledged that

Chelsea would not sit back on their 2-1 lead when Real Betis travel to Stamford Bridge for the return-leg.

"We have to go for the win. We have to play our football and try to win the game," he said.

Vialli felt his team were "sloppy at times", but that the win was a "great result."

"We've got to look forward to the second-leg and I'm hopeful we can get through," he added.

Vialli made himself one of the substitutes and said it felt "strange" being on the bench for the entire 90 minutes.

"It's very difficult being on the bench. It's a new experience for me," he said.

"I was leaving it to the players and trying to say something positive. But Rixy (Graham Rix) was great and all the players were great."

Two-goal hero Flo said: "I've been sitting on the bench for a few games. I was thinking positive and waiting to take my chance. I wanted to score very badly and I'm very happy. It's fun just to be part of the Chelsea set-up."

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VFB Stuttgart's Krstijan Djordjevic (R) fights for the ball with Slavia Prague's Vladimir Labant during the first leg of their quarter final Cup Winner's Cup match in Prague (Reuters photo)

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Schumacher fastest in Aussie GP practice

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Dual world champion Michael Schumacher posted the fastest lap time in the first practice sessions Friday for the season-opening Australian Formula One Grand Prix here on Sunday.

The German, expertly negotiating the rain-slickened Albert Park race circuit in his Ferrari, clocked one minute 33.826 seconds in the second session to trump McLaren racer Mika Hakkinen and defending world champion Jacques Villeneuve in a Williams.

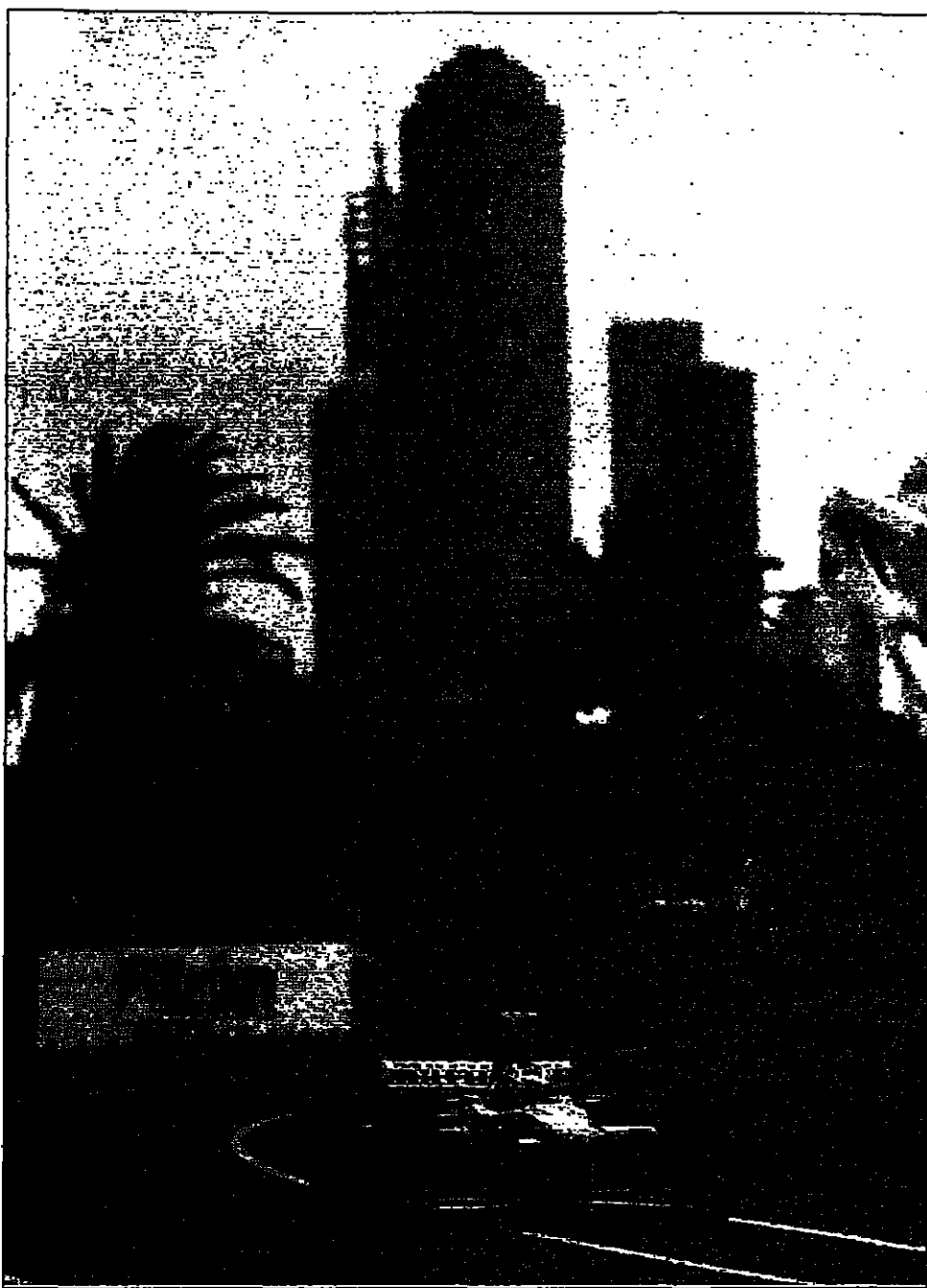
The McLarens of Hakkinen and his Scottish teammate David Coulthard had finished the opening session with the quickest times, but Schumacher went faster in the second session on wet-weather tyres.

Hakkinen improved on his first session time to be second-fastest with 1:34.432 and Villeneuve was next in 1:35.023.

German rookie Alexander Wurz, in his first season with Benetton, was up with the pace in the fourth, quickest time of 1:35.270, ahead of last year's Australian GP champion Coulthard, in the lead McLaren car, in 1:35.409.

Ralf Schumacher, the younger brother of Michael and driving a Jordan, was sixth fastest in 1:35.708 ahead of Sauber's English driver Johnny Herbert (1:35.876).

Villeneuve's Williams teammate Heinz-Harald Frentzen was 10th quickest in 1:36.741.



Germany's Michael Schumacher takes a corner during the free practice session with the Melbourne sky-line behind. Schumacher clocked the fastest time during the rain-interrupted session, with Finland's Mika Hakkinen second and current world champion, Canadian Jacques Villeneuve third. The Australian Grand Prix starts on March 8 (Reuters photo)



Brazilian Rubens Barrichello (R) waits in his pit garage as team Stewart mechanics ready his Ford powered race car for practice March 6. Barrichello was 12th fastest with a time of one minute 37.023 seconds. Teams are preparing for Sunday's Australian Formula One Grand Prix, the first of the 1998 season (Reuters photo)

Australian Grand Prix winners

Year	Driver	Team
1990	Nelson Piquet (Bra)	Benetton-Ford
1991	Ayrton Senna (Bra)	McLaren-Honda
1992	Gerhard Berger (Aut)	McLaren-Honda
1993	Ayrton Senna (Bra)	McLaren-Ford
1994	Nigel Mansell (Eng)	Williams-Renault
1995	Damon Hill (Eng)	Williams-Renault
1996	Damon Hill (Eng)	Williams-Renault
1997	David Coulthard (Sco)	McLaren-Mercedes

Top seed Philippoussis knocked out of Scottsdale Classic

SCOTTSDALE (AFP) — Mark Philippoussis collapsed as frustration over line calls blew his game apart, producing a 5-7, 6-2, 6-0 second-round loss to German Tommy Haas at the ATP Tour event here Thursday night.

The Australian top seed was cruising along with the first set in his pocket, but let himself go to seed late in the second set as in a psychological cave-in set in.

"I lost it completely," World No. 13 Philippoussis said of his composure. "It was disgraceful the way I played out there in the last two sets."

Philippoussis last lost a set to love against Karim Alami on clay in Rome last May at the Italian Open, 53 matches ago.

"I got frustrated at the line calls and I don't know why. I fell apart. But I'll forget about this match when I get

back to the hotel."

The bit-hitting Aussie's miserable state was evidenced by his serving statistics — a mere three aces in the one-hour, 47-minute rout.

Haas, who reached the semi-finals last week in Philadelphia and lost to Pete Sampras, next plays Canadian Sebastian Lareau Friday for a semi-final berth.

Lareau, who also made it to the Philly semis, ousted Slovak Dominik Hrbaty 7-6 (7/3), and also got to the Philly semis.

Andrea Gaudenzi's return to the U.S. after more than two years away proved a success as the Italian defeated Jeff Tarango 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 for a quarter-final place.

The World No. 60, expected to figure in Italy's Davis Cup date in Genoa against India on clay next month, is on the comeback trail after

missing five months in 1996 with lingering shoulder problems.

His last quarter-final was in Marbella, Spain, last September, on his favoured clay, one of three quarters he achieved last year.

Aussie Jason Stoltenberg beat Carlos Costa of Spain 6-3, 2-6, 6-4 and next takes on Gaudenzi.

Crowd pleaser Andre Agassi had already reached the quarters, where he will face fellow American Jan-Michael Gambill.

Haas, a good friend of Philippoussis off court who also trains with American tennis guru Nick Bollettieri in Florida like his mate, said he took advantage of his opportunities.

"A lot depends on how Mark plays," said the 19-year-old from Hamburg, the youngest player in the ATP Tour Top 50 at No. 40 in the world. "You have to try and

hang in there and not make mistakes."

"I didn't play my best tennis, but I felt good on court. I'm very happy to have won. Mark got angry about the calls, made easy mistakes and gave up."

Haas won as Philippoussis, trailing 0-5 in the third, made three straight backhand errors, then missed forehand chip from a net cord which bounced off of the racket of Haas on the first of three match points.

"I'm disappointed at how I played," said the Australian, 21, who has been demonstrating a newfound maturity this year and won the title at Memphis last month.

"Bad calls happen all the time. I'm not sure why I acted this way. I was just not there tonight."

Rusedski powers into last eight

ROTTERDAM (AFP) — Greg Rusedski slammed down 19 aces Thursday as he took just 45 minutes to defeat American Richey Reneberg 6-3, 6-2 and claim a place in the last eight of the ATP Tour event here.

The No. 3 seed from Britain dropped just nine points on his own serve as he completely overpowered Reneberg.

He also produced a perfect game when he served four straight aces when leading 2-1 in the second set.

Rusedski, who now has a 3-0 record against Reneberg, was joined in the quarter-finals by Swede Thomas Johansson, New Zealander Brett Steven and Spaniard Thomas Carbonell.

Johansson edged Dane Kenneth Carlsen 6-3, 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (10/8). Steven defeated Martin Damm of the Czech Republic 7-6 (7/5), 6-7 (5/7), 7-5 and Carbonell downed Swede Mikael Tillstrom 6-2, 1-6, 6-2.

Tyson sues King for more than \$100m

NEW YORK (AFP) — Mike Tyson, boxing's cash cow who reportedly is on the verge of financial ruin, has sued his longtime promoter Don King for more than \$100 million for allegedly cheating him of millions.

Tyson, who has completely re-organized his professional life in the last month, filed suit in U.S. District Court in Manhattan, alleging that the promoter has cheated him out of millions of dollars since 1986.

Reportedly facing a \$7 million tax payment, Tyson recently formed Mike Tyson Enterprises and hired entertainment lawyer Jerry Wald. He has established ties to longtime manager Shelly Finkel and reportedly has contacted retired basketball superstar Magic Johnson in an advisory capacity.

Currently suspended for biting the ears of champion Evander Holyfield in a heavyweight title bout last summer, Tyson is scheduled to make an appearance at Wrestlemania on March 29 and has appeared on World Wrestling Federation telecasts in the last month.

He reportedly is receiving \$3 million for his association with the WWE. While Tyson has said that he is not broke, the suit alleges that King has defrauded the former champion of more than \$100 million accumulated over his star-crossed career.

King, Don King Productions, DKP Corporations and Kingvision Pay Per View Limited are all listed as defendants in the suit. The complaint goes on to claim



Mike Tyson (L) sued his longtime promoter Don King (R) for \$100 million, charging that King fraudulently siphoned off millions of dollars from his boxing winnings (Reuters photo)

King committed "fundamental breaches of trust and fraudulent acts."

"Once King and DKP controlled every facet of Tyson's monies, purses, accounts, books and records, they wrongfully took monies from Tyson for their own benefit," the suit alleges.

"King and DKP fraudulently diverted millions of Tyson's monies by way of secret reductions in Tyson's profit participation, accounting manipulations and improper deductions."

The suit also charges that King and DKP "grossly abused the trust that Tyson placed in them." Tyson's lawyers allege that King signed an exclusive promotion contract with Tyson while the fighter was in prison on a rape conviction without any legal counsel.

King also is accused of "double- and triple-dipping in purse and telecast

money." The suit claims that when Tyson's new accountant asked for financial files from an "independent" accountant that handled his affairs, he was told, "I can't because the files are in cabinets owned by Don King."

Finkel, one of the most powerful managers in boxing history, met with Tyson last week in Los Angeles and told the New York Daily News that "Mike understands he should put his life in order."

Tyson became the youngest heavyweight champion in history at the age of 20 when he knocked out Trevor Berbick in the second round of a World Boxing Council title fight on November 22, 1986.

Six years later, Tyson was convicted of rape and served three years in an Indiana prison before he was released in March 1995.

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DEFENSIVE DECEPTION

Both vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH		EAST	
♠ K J 10 9 7 5	♠ A Q 8	♠ A Q 8	♠ J 9 7 5
♥ 8 4	♥ J 10 8	♥ A Q 8	♥ A Q 8
♦ J 10 8	♦ K 4	♦ A Q 8	♦ 10 8 2
♣ A 3 2	♣ A 3 2	♣ A 3 2	♣ A 3 2

The bidding:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1NT Pass 2♦ Pass
Pass Pass

Opening lead: Queen of ♠

They say seeing is believing. Try to beat a Three-Card Monte trickster and you may be disillusioned, but also be wary when a card prodigal is in charge of the defense. Here's a beautiful example of what we mean.

North's response of two hearts was a transfer bid to spades. North knew exactly where the hand should be played.

West led the queen of clubs.

Looking at all four hands, it is easy to see that South must lose two spades because the queen is unfavorably placed but, since both the ace and queen of diamonds are outside, only one diamond trick need be lost. East created an illusion that the opposite was true.

Declarer won the opening lead in hand and immediately ran the eight of spades. Without a moment's hesitation East, Mike Passell of Dallas, won the ace, cashed the ace of diamonds and continued with a low diamond.

Consider the situation from declarer's point of view. It looked for all the world that East was trying for a diamond ruff, so there was no point to finessing. Therefore, declarer rose with the king. Secondly, cashing three rounds of hearts immediately for a diamond discard from the table risked a defensive ruff. Now was time to repeat the "marked" spade finesse. Even if West started with four spades to the queen, South would be able to dispose of dummy's diamond loser later.

The thought is rather to the point. Declarer led low spade and put in the seven. A delighted defender took the queen and cashed the queen of diamonds for a one-trick set.

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Belgians release Algerian after swoop on Islamists

BRUSSELS (AFP) — Belgian police on Friday detained an Algerian suspected of being a member of an Islamist fundamentalist group but released him after several hours of questioning.

The man was detained in the eastern town of Verviers, a day after Belgian police swooped on eight suspected members of Algeria's Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in a raid in

Brussels.

"The investigating magistrate decided he could be set free," the Brussels public prosecutor's office said of the latest suspect, whose identity was not given.

But it added this "does not mean there are no charges against him." It would not give further details.

Suspicious documents were discovered at the man's home but no weapons were found, police said.

The raid was ordered by the same Brussels investigators who were behind Thursday's operation, described as one of the biggest ever mounted in Brussels.

The Belgian interior ministry said the eight detained men included senior officials of the GIA, which has waged a violent insurgency in Algeria and has also been blamed for terrorist attacks in France.

Kohl asks Israel for 'concrete progress' in Mideast peace

Combined agency dispatches

ISRAELI PRIME Minister Benjamin Netanyahu began a two-day visit to Norway on Friday for talks on the stalled Middle East peace process with top Norwegian officials.

Mr. Netanyahu, arriving from a brief visit to Germany where he held talks with Chancellor Helmut Kohl, was met at Oslo's Fornebu airport by his host, Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik.

"The purpose of my visit to Norway is two-fold. One is to get better acquainted with Premier Bondevik, the other is to seek new ideas for the Middle East peace process," Mr. Netanyahu said on arrival.

Asked if he had any new proposals with him, he replied: "I have some ideas. I think we still can do a lot."

However, the contentious issue of Jerusalem is not up for discussion, he said. "Jerusalem has been a Jewish city for 3,000 years, in other words it will not be part of any negotiations."

Mr. Kohl asked for "concrete progress" in the Middle East regarding Jewish settlements and military withdrawal from the West Bank in talks in Bonn Friday with Mr. Netanyahu.

While expressing understanding for Israel's desire for "peace with security," Mr. Kohl impressed upon Mr. Netanyahu his "growing concern at the freezing of the Middle East peace process," according to a statement by government spokesman Peter Haunsmann.

The chancellor called on both the Israeli government and the Palestinian leadership to "remain faithful to the peace process begun in Oslo and to exploit every opportunity for dialogue and progress."

The Israeli premier, currently on a European tour, left Germany for Norway after a two-hour meeting with the chancellor.

Mr. Netanyahu, who arrived from Madrid and will be going on to London after Oslo, has called on the European Union to help restart the peace process and has not ruled out a new international peace conference.

But he has repeatedly rejected any Jewish settlement freeze in the occupied territories and insists Israel will carry out only a limited further troop withdrawal from the West Bank and then only after the Palestinians meet a long series of conditions.

During his first day of talks in Madrid on Thursday, Mr. Netanyahu asserted that he remained committed to the Palestinian peace process, but indicated no flexibility on the central issues of land and settlements.

"If it were not the case, I would not be here," he said.

In contrast with an interview he gave to El Pais newspaper in which he was quoted as saying Europeans were ignorant about the Middle East but the United States understands the situation well, Mr. Netanyahu said Thursday that Europe, with its long experience in the Middle East, can help revive the Middle East peace process.

"Europe has good relationships with both the Arabs and the Israelis [and it] has a long experience in the Middle East," Mr. Netanyahu told a press conference with Spanish Premier Jose Maria Aznar.

"Europe can do three things: Assist the Palestinians economically," boost the multilateral negotiating track and engage in the permanent status negotiations, he said.

Mr. Netanyahu did not explicitly rule out a new international peace conference like the one held in Madrid in 1991. "In Madrid, in Gaza or elsewhere, what counts is to revive the peace process," he said. "It could go forward very quickly."

New Mossad chief woos public

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel's new Mossad chief went on a public charm offensive on Friday in an early bid to repair the spy service's bruised image.

Efraim Halevy, named this week to head an agency reeling from a succession of bungles on foreign soil, laid out his case for effective intelligence in an article in Israel's tabloid newspaper Yediot Ahronot.

"Intelligence gathering is universal. All states have equipped themselves with long arms in order to gather intelligence about their enemies," Mr. Halevy wrote.

"Even the most cautious intelligence missions are accompanied... by caustic failures. Yet no state has tried to 'organise the field' in terms of law or operations. There are no accepted 'understandings' in this area," he wrote.

Mr. Halevy's published defence was rare for an agency whose work relies on secrecy and is exposed to little outside scrutiny.

It appeared to reflect a move

to win back public confidence following the recent spate of bad press.

Mr. Halevy, Israel's ambassador to the European Union and a former deputy Mossad chief, was appointed to head the agency by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday.

He will succeed Danny Yatom, who resigned last week following a failed attempt to kill a Palestinian Hamas leader in Jordan and revelations of the arrest of a Mossad agent in Switzerland caught trying to bug a private house.

Those scandals and the arrest of a former official on suspicion of feeding the agency fabricated information on Israel's arch-foe Syria have exposed Mossad to an unprecedented flood of publicity.

Mr. Halevy said Israel needed a strong intelligence agency to maintain the balance of power in the Middle East.

He said intelligence gathering had been part and parcel of Israel since the state was

founded in 1948.

"Its leaders believed, and still believe, that the definitive condition for balancing the numerical gap between Israel and her enemies was the promise of good, ready, steady intelligence," Mr. Halevy wrote.

"Without this kind of information, the state would have to set up a standing army of a size that both the society and the economy could not sustain," he said.

Mossad has historically operated independently. Israel's justice ministry is now drafting a bill that would define the limits of its authority and require government approval of the organisation's objectives. Ha'aretz newspaper reported on Friday.

It said the bill would set up a special ministerial committee to oversee the Mossad and subject it to supervision by parliament's subcommittee on secret services that oversees Israel's domestic security arm, Shin Bet.

Israeli emigration agency under fire

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli legislators called Friday for the dissolution of a once secret government agency which helped spirit Jews out of the former Soviet Union after state auditors slammed the body for gross mismanagement.

A report released late Thursday by the state comptroller, Miriam Ben Porat, charged that the agency, Nativ, was riven with "chaos and waste" and that its director, Yacov Kedmi, had "treated state property as if it were his own."

Yossi Katz, head of the parliamentary committee which oversees financing for Nativ and Israel's other secret services, responded to the auditor's report by calling Friday for the closure of Nativ.

"Given the chaos which reigns in Nativ it must be closed and Kedmi dismissed," Mr. Katz told AFP.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, currently on a European tour, decided to appoint an inter-ministerial

committee to examine the activities, structure and missions of Nativ, officials said.

Mr. Netanyahu discussed the comptroller's report Friday with Industry and Trade Minister Nathan Sharansky, head of the Israel B'aliya Party which represents recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union, they said.

Mr. Sharansky, a former "refusenik" who spent years in Soviet prison camps before being released in exchange for a Russian spy and emigrating to Israel, has come out against closing down Nativ.

Nativ, also known as the "Liaison Office," was created in 1952 and worked secretly inside the Soviet Union to encourage Jewish emigration to Israel.

During the 1980s when the Jewish agency was allowed to operate openly to facilitate emigration from Russia and the other Soviet republics, Nativ continued functioning alongside it, even after the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1989.

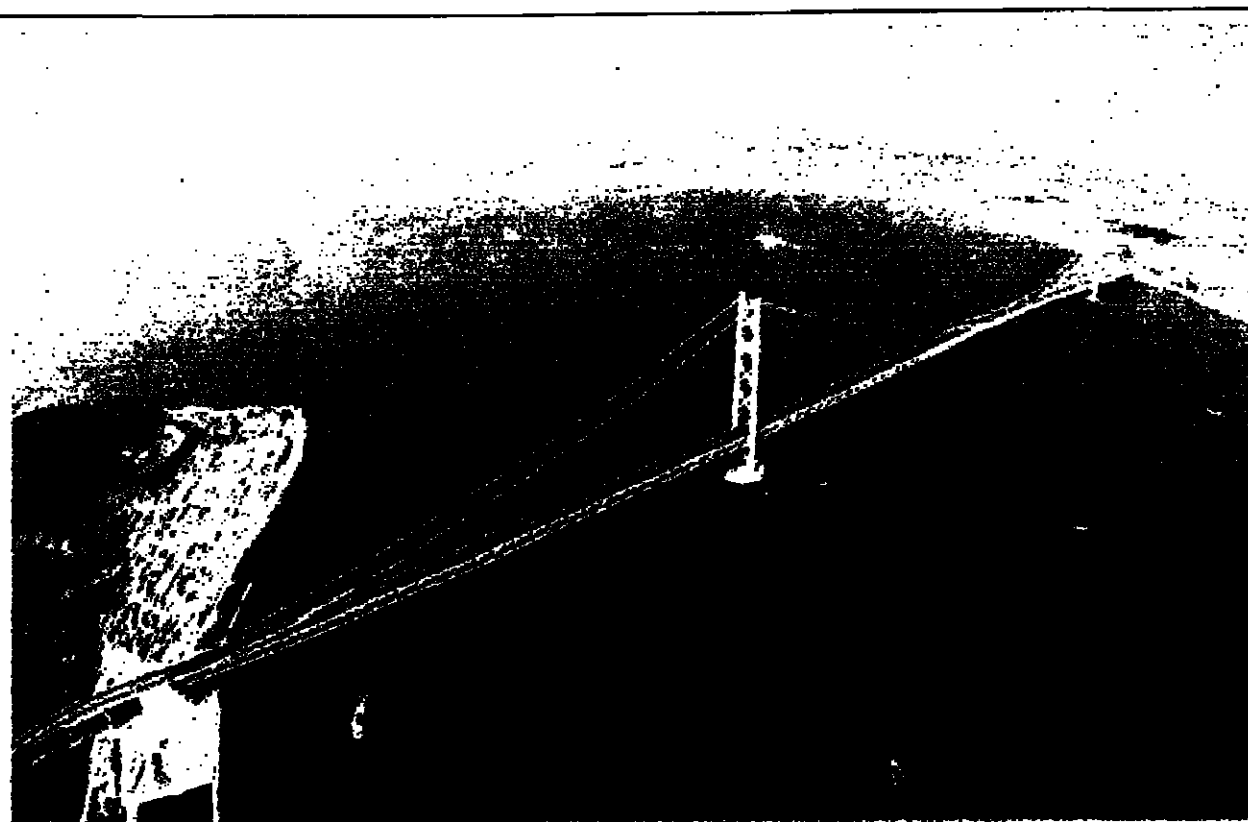
The comptroller's report said that once the non-government Jewish agency was able to work openly in the former Soviet Union, there was much duplication with the operations of Nativ, which continued to spend millions of dollars a year with little clear accounting.

Ms. Ben-Porat said Nativ also showed little success in its primary task of encouraging Jewish emigration to Israel.

Since 1989, nearly 800,000 Jews emigrated to Israel from the former Soviet Union, but the numbers have been falling steadily in recent years.

"There should be an investigation into whether [Nativ] is capable of making a special contribution to achieving state goals" concerning emigration, Ms. Ben-Porat said.

Nativ has also been accused by immigrants from the ex-Soviet Union of having solicited funds from them and then lost their savings in questionable financial dealings.



LONGEST BRIDGE READY IN APRIL: Akashi Kaikyo Bridge, the world's longest suspension bridge, is near completion and due to open in western Japan in April. The bridge, linking Japan's western city of Kobe (far right) with Awaji Island (L) over Akashi Strait, is a three-span, two-hinged stiffening girder system suspension bridge, 3,910 metres in length with a centre span of 1,990 metres (Reuters photo)

Ankara accuses Bonn of Nazi-style policy

LONDON (AFP) — Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz on Friday accused Bonn of blocking Ankara's hopes of joining the European Union, comparing Germany's policy to the Nazis' "Lebensraum" doctrine.

In an emotive interview with the Financial Times, Mr. Yilmaz claimed German Chancellor Helmut Kohl was pursuing in eastern Europe a policy of "Lebensraum," Adolf Hitler's aggressive policy of expansion in the 1930s to create "living space" for the German people.

"The Germans continue the same strategy as before," the Turkish premier said. "They believe in Lebensraum. That means the central and eastern

European countries are of strategic importance for Europe and for Germany as their backyard."

"Their final goal is to include these countries in NATO and the EU, and to divide Europe between Bulgaria and Turkey. Turkey should be a good neighbour for Europe, but should not be a member of the EU," he added.

Mr. Yilmaz's outspoken attack reflects the depth of bitterness in Ankara at an EU decision in December to exclude Turkey from talks on joining an expanded union, citing concerns for human rights and Turkish-Greek rows.

But his use of the word

"Lebensraum," with all its associations, is seen likely to infuriate Bonn.

In his interview, the Turkish premier rejected efforts by Britain, the current EU president, to try and persuade Turkey to attend the March 12 conference, grouping the 15 EU member states as well as countries applying for membership — 10 central and eastern European states plus Cyprus.

"If we attend the European conference, it would mean accepting the discrimination against us," Mr. Yilmaz said, calling on the EU to reverse the Luxembourg decision at the union's next summit meeting in Cardiff in June.

Mr. Yilmaz also warned that

the sidelining of Turkey had "undermined" efforts to achieve a settlement on the ethnically divided island of Cyprus, to allow both Greek and Turkish Cypriots to negotiate jointly for EU membership.

"The EU has committed a very grave mistake," he said. "It is impossible to bring the Turkish Cypriots to the membership negotiations unless there is a major change in EU policy."

And Mr. Yilmaz repeated warnings that Turkey would take "appropriate measures" to prevent the deployment of Russian S-300 missiles, due to be delivered to the Greek-Cypriot authorities later this year.

Israeli minister seeks French backing for pullback from Lebanon

PARIS (AFP) — Israel's Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai was expected to find little enthusiasm from France in talks Friday on a conditional Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon.

Mr. Mordechai, who was lunching with counterpart Alain Richard before talks with Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine, will seek to enlist aid from France, which has close ties with Lebanon, in convincing Beirut to agree to the scheme.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other Israeli officials put out new feelers this week about the possibility of ending the increasingly costly occupation of a buffer zone in south Lebanon.

The Israelis offered to implement a 20-year-old U.N. resolution calling for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon if the Beirut government pledged to ensure the security of the border area and prevent guerrilla attacks on northern Israel.

Mr. Netanyahu specifically demanded that the Lebanese army disarm the Hizbollah militia, which has carried out most attacks on Israeli troops and an Israeli-allied Lebanese militia in south Lebanon.

But in the absence of progress of the stalled Middle East peace process, the proposal appears bound to meet resistance.

"We cannot tell our Lebanese friends to accept an arrangement they don't want," Mr. Vedrine said last Sunday, adding that problems affecting the Israelis, the Lebanese and the Syrians "are interconnected."

But he added prudently that "if we can talk, listen, carry messages, discuss together, naturally we are available."

In statements Wednesday, Syria and Lebanon bluntly insisted that Israel must make an unconditional withdrawal from southern Lebanon in line with U.N. Security Council Resolution 425, and that the resolution was not negotiable.

U.S. prevents arms shipments to Iran

WASHINGTON (R) — Federal investigators have arrested two men and halted attempts to transfer spare parts to Iran for U.S.-built F-14 fighters and air-to-air missiles, the U.S. customs service said on Thursday.

The service confirmed a New York Times report that Parviz Lavi, 65, of Huntington, Long Island, and Daniel Malloy of Oradell, N.J., were arrested on Tuesday.

The movement of such military hardware would violate a U.S. arms embargo against Iran that has been in place since the hostage crisis at the U.S. embassy in Tehran in 1979.

Lavi, who owns Omega Industries, an arms company on Long Island, was accused of trying to buy and ship engine blades to Iran for its ageing U.S.-built F-14 fighter jets. The Times said he was Iranian, but had been living in the United States for years.

Malloy was accused of seeking to sell Iran batteries for Phoenix air-to-air missiles carried by the F-14s, sold to Tehran under the late Shah of Iran.

Federal agents and U.S. defence officials said Iran's military was desperately trying to get parts to maintain its ageing fleet of F-14s.

U.S. Senate to vote on Iran missile

WASHINGTON (R) — U.S. Senate majority Trent Lott said on Thursday he will schedule a vote by April 3 on legislation to clamp sanctions on foreign entities that help Iran develop or acquire ballistic missiles. The legislation has been cleared by the House of Representatives, and the Senate bill already has 80 cosponsors, Mr. Lott said. Russian Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin will be in Washington next week to discuss security issues with U.S. Vice President Al Gore. Russia has been accused of helping Iran acquire ballistic missiles. "In the continued absence of tangible and verifiable progress in ceasing the cooperation of Russian entities with Iran's determined drive to acquire ballistic missile technology, the Senate will consider the Iran missile proliferation sanctions act before the Easter recess," Mr. Lott said in a statement. That recess begins on April 4.

Defence Department spokesman Ken Bacon said: "We are aware of efforts by Iran to purchase not only spare parts for existing weapons but also to expand its current arsenal with more modern weapons."

He said it was a law enforcement matter, adding: "I think you can deduce from the report that we take these efforts seriously. We are working hard as a government to enforce sanctions we have against Iran and we are working very hard to prevent [arms] proliferation in the Gulf by Iran."

The customs service said Malloy, owner of International Helicopter Inc. of Northvale, N.J., was charged with

attempting to obtain and send nearly \$200,000 worth of missile batteries to Iran.

"This arrest reflects ongoing efforts... to apprehend individuals who seek to profit from the demand by such countries as Iran for military items which are manufactured in the United States but which cannot be legally exported to that country," said customs special agent John Varrone, in New York.

The Times reported that Malloy intended to ship the batteries via Singapore.

Lavi's firm has offices in the Netherlands and he intended to ship the engine blades through Rotterdam and sell them to the Iranian military for \$25,000, customs officials said.

Hindu nationalists claim right to form government in India

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's Hindu nationalists claimed their right to take power Friday after finishing at the head of the largest bloc in the country's fragmented 545-seat parliament.

The rightwing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) said the election result, giving the party and its allies 249 seats, was a mandate to rule the world's largest democracy.

"This is a mandate for the BJP to govern," spokeswoman Sushma Swaraj told reporters.

The mandate has been given for the policies of BJP and against the non-cooperation of the [outgoing, multi-party] United Front coalition, whose minority government collapsed in November, she said.

A statement released after the meeting of BJP leaders, including prime ministerial

candidate Atal Behari Vajpayee, warned against preventing the party from bidding for power.

"This mandate should be respected. No attempt should be made to negate this mandate," it said. "The need of the hour is a responsible government as well as a responsible opposition."

"We will strive to put the economy back on the rails and put an end to confrontationism in society and politics and enable India to stride into the 21st century as a strong and prosperous nation."

"We are truly the number one party of today this time. Not only are we ahead of the Congress tally, we have also left behind the party that ruled India for 45 of its last 50 years in terms of popular support."

The statement came as the Congress Party, the nationalists' main rival and the second

largest group in parliament, made last-ditch efforts to cobble together an alliance with the United Front to form a new government.

The Congress and its allies have 166 seats and the United Front 95.

The United Front was set to meet here Friday to decide if it should join hands with the Congress Party to prevent the dominant Hindu nationalists from taking office.

But one front member is toying with the idea of backing the BJP.

The Congress propped up a minority United Front coalition government from June 1996 until November 1997.

The BJP formed its first government in New Delhi after the 1996 hung elections. But it resigned within a fortnight after failing to win majority support in parliament.



Intelligence, beauty a 'frightful' combination — Zyuganov

MOSCOW (R) — Russia's Communist Party chief, in a departure from effusive speeches marking International Women's Day, was quoted as saying nothing was "more frightful" than a woman who was both clever and pretty. Gennady Zyuganov told women journalists in parliament he was particularly fond of clever and of pretty women. But there was "nothing more frightful" than a combination of the two. Zyuganov said he preferred women "who do not ask too many questions and, after offering advice, don't come back the next day to see whether it has been acted on. In general, women should not argue about critical issues."

Di Caprio, Campbell caught by surprise

PARIS (AFP) — "Titanic" star Leonardo Di Caprio must have a thing about water. Reportedly, he's been sharing it — and baring it — with supermodel Naomi Campbell. Not content with plunging into the icy North Atlantic in the epic movie on the 1912 sinking of the liner, he returned to the admittedly warmer climes of the Caribbean last week. According to France's Gala magazine, he and Campbell were surprised taking a naked dip in the pool of a Havana hotel after an evening of partying.

Sicilian fishermen hook ancient Greek bronze deity

MAZARA DEL VALLO (AFP) — Fishermen working off the southern coast of Sicily landed a prize catch Wednesday when they hauled up from the depths an ancient Greek bronze statue. Archaeologists said the 1.7-metre statue, distinguished by its prominent genitalia and pointed ears, could be the ancient Greek god of the wind, Eole. It has no legs and only one arm, but here again the fishermen of the Captain Ciccio may be able to shed some. Last summer, they retrieved from the same spot a Urnaze leg, which is thought to belong to the statue.

Aussie cricketer in India calls for emergency food drop

SYDNEY (R) — Australian leg spinner Shane Warne, desperate for some plain Australian food after two weeks on tour in India, has called for an emergency shipment of tinned baked beans and spaghetti. The Australian cricket board said Warne, who dislikes Indian food, had asked for the canned food after losing several kilograms from his ample frame. "Baked beans and spaghetti — that's what he wants," a board spokesman told Reuters. Cases of cans would be airlifted to Warne's team in Madras from an Australian diplomatic mission in India before the first test started on Friday, he said.

Five-card draw decides tied election

ESTANCIA (R) — Two candidates locked in a tie for mayor of this small central New Mexico town settled their contest with a flip of a coin and a game of five-card draw. Incumbent James Farrington and Joanne Carlson each received 68 votes in the Estancia mayoral race. According to the town's provision, they had to decide on a game of chance to break the tie. "I wanted five-card draw, she wanted to roll the dice," said Farrington, a sandwich shop owner. "So we flipped a coin to see what game would be played. She lost the flip, we played five-card draw and I won with ace high."

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